

**A Warning to Cousins! See the Story Complete in this No.**

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"I CAN NEVER THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR SUCCOURING ME!" SAID THE YOUNG MAN, GLANCING DOWN AT HIS BEAUTIFUL COMPANION.

## COUSIN JACK.

By the Author of

"Lord Elstrid's Fate," etc., etc.

[A NOVELLETTE.]

COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.

### CHAPTER I.

"**W**ELL?" ejaculated Miss Sophie, rather sharply, staring at her sister through her gold-rimmed glasses intently. "Well?" repeated Miss Mary, who was Miss Sophie's echo, with feeble inquiry.

"What are we to do?"  
"I don't know, I am sure, sister. What are we to do?"  
"Can't you make a suggestion?"  
"I don't think I can make a suggestion. Won't you?"  
"You might help me!" snapped Miss Sophie. "Two heads are better than one."  
"Shall we put it aside for to-day? Let it rest until to-morrow or next day," suggested Miss Mary, raising her light blue eyes timidly to her companion's stern face, on which rested a look of extreme and haughty displeasure.  
"Most certainly not. By no means. 'Procrastination is the thief of time.' 'Never put off until to-morrow what ought to be done to-day.' Take those excellent

maxims to heart, sister. I fear me you are more inclined than ever to avoid facing anything unpleasant, that you still procrastinate whenever you can, which is a bad habit!" and the elder Miss Mortimer surveyed the younger one through her glasses with judicial severity.  
"Oh, sister!" exclaimed the culprit, her pale face flushing to a sickly pink.  
"It is true, don't deny it!" she exclaimed, imperatively, though Mary Mortimer showed little desire to do so. "I have done my best to eradicate the failing, and I have been unsuccessful. When a thing has to be faced, whether pleasant or the reverse, it is better to face it bravely than put off the evil day. If we don't think of it now, and arrange what we shall do

**A Letter from the Editor, see Page 94.**

with regard to Evelina, we must before the week is out. So let us now look at the case with impartial eyes, and decide."

"I do wish," added Miss Sophia, a trifle irreverently, "that folk would not marry and have children, and then leave them to the care of others upon whom they have no claim!"

"Janetta was our cousin, sister!" ventured the procrastinator.

"Cousin, indeed! I hardly call it that. She was a cousin thrice removed, and I, for one, warned her against marrying Felix Everton, a clerk in a bank, with two hundred a-year, and not a penny saved. It was ridiculous, preposterous! I don't know what the young folk are thinking about these times. They wed in such a reckless fashion, without looking ahead, or providing for the proverbial rainy day. No wonder they both died soon."

"No wonder!" echoed Miss Mary, softly. "Poor things! They must have suffered greatly!"

"They had no business to marry," asserted Miss Sophie, "nor to die and leave their child unprotected for."

"They couldn't help it; and Mrs. Wilnot says there is something for Evelina."

"Something!" with intense scorn.

"Thirty pounds a-year. I should like to know how far that will go towards her maintenance. Won't even pay for a decent school; and if, like her mother, she develops a taste for dress, it certainly won't clothe her when she comes out."

"Still, sister, we are well off!" ventured the younger sister, with some hesitation, and a furtive glance of apprehension at her companion.

"You are!" Miss Sophie told her, severely.

"Remember, please, that you have exactly four hundred and fifty pounds per annum more than I have—what your godmother, Miss Whitbread, left you, over and above our revered father's legacy."

"Exactly so. What my godmother, Miss Whitbread, left me," echoed the echo.

"Therefore you can contemplate the intrusion of this child with more equanimity than I can. The strain will not be so severely felt by you."

"Not so severely felt by me sister; and I am willing," continued Miss Mary, with wonderful and almost unprecedented courage; only before her mind to embolden her was the memory of poor Janetta Everton's wan face as she raised her eyes, all dim and misty with the pangs of approaching dissolution, and begged in feeble tones, that Mary would cherish and protect her little child, her dearly-loved Evelina, "to allow a hundred and fifty pounds for her expenses, education, dress, &c., if—if you think that would do?"

"Why, yes," assented Miss Sophie, slowly, having gained her point without uttering one direct word about it. "I think that would suffice for dress and education, and possibly leave a slender—a very slender—margin for pocket money. As to the rest, why there is plenty of room here," sweeping a glance round the handsome, oak-panelled room in which they sat, "for several more; and what is enough in the way of food for three people is enough for four."

"Quite enough, sister!"

"And when we travel, or go to the seaside, one more will not make much difference."

"No; not much difference," agreed Miss Mary; adding, a moment later, quite brightly for her, "Then the little girl may come here to live with us, sister?"

"Well, yes, I suppose so. Only, you know, we must consult Jack. After all, this is Jack's house, not ours; and he comes of age next summer, when he will

be quite independent of us, and he can do exactly as he pleases."

"Of course, of course. Certainly, we must consult Jack. This is his house, not ours. It must be as he pleases, of course—certainly."

"How I do hope he will let the little girl come here!" added Miss Mary, mentally, as her pale blue eyes looked out across the trim lawn, daisy-enamelled and buttercup-spangled, to where, under the shade of a freshly-clothed oak, a young man was lying at full length, his head on a bundle of newly-cut grass, his arms propping up a book which he was reading in a lazy fashion, as though the glowing warmth of the June day had made him feel idle, luxurious, and indolent.

"We had better get the matter finished at once, and have done with it," said Miss Sophie, with decision. "I shall ask him now what his wishes are in the matter."

"So soon, sister, and suddenly?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"I—I don't know."

"I don't suppose you do. If the child is to come here, the sooner she comes the better. The Wiltons are not very desirable people, being mediocre city folk; and, moreover, they live in that detestable part of London—Islington! Now, I am perfectly certain she will learn nothing good in Islington. The bailiff's daughter may have been a superlatively lovely young woman, and all that sort of thing; still, I have no doubt she said 'whatever,' and 'I do do,' and 'I does be'; drank tea out of a saucer, used a knife as often as a fork, helped herself to potatoes with her fingers, and didn't know the difference between a knight and a baron. No, I won't have the child stay another week in that dreadful place if she is to come here and live with us, and become a Mortimer of Eastdene. The sooner she leaves it the better, and we shall have to get a first-rate governess to brush away any vulgarities of speech and manner she may have contracted during her sojourn in the unfashionable suburb of North London."

"Is not the child rather young for training of that sort yet a while, sister?"

"Certainly not—by no means. One can never commence too young in training the young idea. Her education must commence forthwith. Janetta Thorpe was pretty, very pretty! and was a fool to throw herself away upon that poor creature, Everton!"

"She loved him dearly," interrupted Miss Mary, who was of a very sentimental turn of mind, a feeling which had been ruthlessly crushed and ridiculed by her sister always.

"Love a fiddlestick!" retorted Miss Sophie, with great scorn. "He was a poor figure, of a man, and a city clerk, without looks, money or position. She was a fool, and paid dearly for her folly. However, I hope the child will be like her. I abhor ugly children. They ought to be pretty."

"I have no doubt the little girl will be nice-looking!"

"She had better be if she wishes for my approval!" announced Miss Sophie, threateningly, as she rose and approached the window.

"Jack!" she cried. "Jack!" her sharp tones somewhat modulated.

"Hullo, aunt. What is it?" returned Jack Jordan, lifting his head from its fragrant pillow.

"I want you."

"What is it? Can't you tell me while I lie here?" he asked, lazily.

"No, my dear boy. I really must ask you to come in to hear what I have to say."

"Is it something of importance then?" he questioned, as he slowly rose to his feet and shook off the bits of grass and decapitated daisies that clung to his clothing,

while the book dropped gently on the close-clipped turf, and lay face downwards, as though awaiting his return.

"Yes."

"Then I will come and hear what it is," and leisurely he crossed the lawn, his eyes roving lovingly over the flower-beds, gay with many-hued blossoms, and a perfect wealth of the queen of flowers, that shed their delicious perfume on the soft air.

He was a tall young man—a big young man altogether—with broad shoulders, long legs, muscular though well-shaped hands, and a somewhat large head, which was covered with a crop of curly brown hair.

His eyes were grey, large, well-opened, and well-placed, and fringed with lashes, a shade or two darker than his hair, while a slight moustache of the same hue clothed his upper lip.

His features were commonplace, but his complexion was fresh and healthy, and his expression very winning and pleasant. He was not very well set up, nor eminently stylish and elegant.

He looked just what he was, an easy-going, good-tempered English country gentleman, that the world and Dame Fortune had treated kindly, and who had never known a trouble beyond, perhaps, the shape of a new cravat, or the cut of a new coat.

"Well, what is it?" he inquired, as he swung himself lightly, considering his size, through the open window, and alighted in the middle of Miss Mary's workbasket, which as usual was reposing on the floor.

"Very sorry, I'm sure," he laughed, with almost boyish glee, as he stooped to pick up the reels, and buttons, and tapes that were flying everywhere. "But why will you put your basket on the floor, Pussy?" looking at his younger aunt mischievously, whom he had christened "Pussy" when he was eight years old—why, neither he, she, nor anyone else knew.

"Never mind, dear!" she replied, amiably. "It doesn't in the least matter, and I don't know why I do put it on the floor."

"More convenient than the table?" he suggested, as he replaced the last reel and hank of thread.

"Yes, I think it is," she agreed, innocently.

"Well, Aunt Sophie," turning to the other. "Now for it?"

"Well, Jack," responded Miss Mortimer, smoothing a crease out of her satin gown with her thin, white, aristocratic-looking hand. "I have had a letter from Mrs. Thomas Wilnot?"

"Who is Mrs. Wilnot? Where does she live?"

"In Acacia-street, Islington."

"Oh!" he ejaculated, looking out at his own acacias, for he was not at all interested in people who lived in Islington, and thanked his stars fervently that it was not his fate to have to live in a fourth-rate suburb of a big town, away from the birds, the bees, the butterflies, the green trees and meadows, the bright flowers, and all the sweet sounds and sights of the country.

"She was a friend of Janetta Thorpe's. You remember her, of course?"

"Perfectly! She was very pretty, and married a city fellow, didn't she?"

"Yes. She made a foolish and unfortunate match, and both she and her husband are dead now."

"Poor soul! She had not a long married life," he said, pityingly.

"No. And she has left a child."

"Poor little beggar!" he exclaimed, boyishly.

"Totally unprovided for."

"That is to say, sister," put in Miss Mary, "totally unprovided for, outside the thirty pounds a year the child has."



"That's nothing, as I told you before," snapped Miss Sophie, crossly.

"It certainly is not much," said Jack, reflectively. "We must do something for her."

"Oh, dear Jack, you are good!" cried Miss Mary joyfully.

"Why, Pussy?" he asked, smiling down at the neat little woman in her grey dress, that seemed to match her thick hair, that was braided flatly to her small head.

"I promised Janetta when she was dying that I would look after the child, and see she did not want!"

"You are always making absurd promises that you can't keep!" said the elder sister, severely.

"But I shall be able to keep this, I hope!" announced Miss Mary, her pale eyes actually gleaming with excitement.

"Jack, I want the little girl to come here and live with us. May she? She is our cousin, you know, and yours."

"Cousin four times removed," observed Miss Sophie in sepulchral tones.

"Certainly. Have her here by all means," said young Jordan at once. "It is the best, the only good thing we can do for her. I never relish the idea of sending a child to one of those big public schools where they clothe, feed, and educate them for about twopence a-year. They can't be happy at them, I am sure."

"Thanks, dear Jack!" and Miss Mary stretched upon tiptoe and kissed her stalwart nephew.

"You had better get her here soon. Poor little beggar!"

"I will go and fetch her," said Miss Sophie.

"Let me go," suggested the young man.

"It would not be proper," declared his elder aunt. "I don't mind the trouble! Or, to speak more correctly, I will sacrifice my comfort to the welfare of this orphan and journey up to London!" and seeing Eastdene was within an hour-and-a-half's journey of London Miss Mortimer's sacrifice was tremendous, and the sacrifice of her comfort immense.

"If it isn't proper, of course I won't go! I'll leave it to you," and, with a gay laugh, this good-natured young man swung himself out of the window, and went back to his book and his bundle of sweet-smelling hay, chuckling a little at the thought of his elder aunt's devotion and attention to the proprieties, which was the result of her early training.

His aunts and his mother were the daughters of Squire Mortimer, of Mortimer How—a man of very old family, and of unbounded pride of birth and position. His eldest daughter Sophie, and his youngest daughter Ada, were fine handsome girls. Mary, on the contrary, was small and plain, but perhaps the most amiable of the three. Ada had early married a Sussex Squire of considerable wealth, the other two remained "unappropriated blessings!"

Miss Mary never sought the admiration of the other sex—rather had she shrunk from it. Miss Sophie, on the contrary, had sought a husband amongst the titled men of the land.

Her pride, like her father's, was unbounded; and what with her beauty, and her money, and her position, she expected to wed at least a lord, and had given herself no end of pretty airs and graces, hardly deigning to look at or be civil to the numerous wealthy esquires who laid their hands and fortune at her feet.

The inevitable result occurred, grasping at the shadowy coronet her ambitious soul coveted she lost the substantial, homely happiness that might have been hers, and dalled with her admirers until her chance was over, and she found herself an old maid.

Her disappointment did not improve her haughty temper, and after their father's death Miss Mary had rather a lively time of it until Mrs. Jordan, losing her husband very suddenly, took a dislike to Jordan Hall, in Yorkshire, where the greater part of her married life had been spent, and took Eastdene, in Sussex, a charming old Tudor mansion, and insisted on both her sisters coming to live with her there.

This they were not loth to do, for they were living in a brand-new villa at Brighton—Mortimer How and a good deal of Mr. Mortimer's property having gone to a cousin, as it was entailed in the male line.

Therefore, it was pleasant to them, especially Miss Mary, to get once more to the free and open life of the country, away from the noise and racket of a gay town.

However, Mrs. Jordan did not survive her husband long, and, with her dying breath, she confided her boy to her sisters' care—a trust they faithfully fulfilled. For even Miss Sophie was very fond of "Jack," and generally ready to do anything for him, while his younger aunt absolutely adored him.

So, between them, he was in a fair way to get spoiled. Only his naturally aimable disposition saved him, and he grew up singularly truthful, honest, and unselfish; and utterly without ambition. This was, perhaps, to be deplored, for, having a handsome income, it would have been better for him to enter the army, or take up politics, or distinguish himself in some way. But he showed not the slightest intention of doing anything of the kind.

He loved his beautiful sunny home, and his horses, and his dogs, his model farm, his conservatories, his melon-pits, his vineries, and the other things a rich country gentleman gathers around him; and he was fond of hunting and shooting. Beyond those he had no pronounced tastes.

And so matters stood when Evelina Everton was introduced into his house—"his cousin four times removed!"

## CHAPTER II.

AFTER all, Miss Sophie was unable to journey to town, owing to a bad attack of rheumatism, so it was Miss Mary who went up to unromantic Islington, and brought the little orphan down to Sussex.

Eagerly the elder sister's eyes scanned the child as she entered the room with "Pussy." Keenly she noted every feature of the young face, every turn of the small, fair, well-shaped head.

Evelina had just turned seven. She was very slight and thin, and by reason of that looked taller than she really was. She was dressed in black, and from the sable-setting the child's fair, flower-like face shone out with startling brilliance. Her colouring was exquisite, her skin beautifully soft and fine, and her features were full of grace, her carriage was well-bred and easy.

Miss Mortimer nodded approval, and her eyes sparkled as she drew the lovely little stranger to her and kissed her with unbounded warmth. She had missed her golden opportunities; but here was a child who, if the fruit was as fair as the blossom, might win the coronet for the Mortimer family she had so foolishly missed. So she took Evelina under her special protection, and fussed and fidgeted over her in order that no harm might come to her beauty, and made the child's life somewhat of a burden to her.

Miss Mary was invariably kind to the orphan; only Jack, being the apple of her eye, and having no ulterior motives with regard to her, she did not take quite such a lively interest in her as Miss Sophie did; while Eve, as she soon came to be called—

the fashion of "it having been started by that omnipotent person Jack—much preferred Miss Mary, and strove her hardest to escape from her elder cousin's toils, and pass her time more naturally and pleasantly with "Pussy."

In this she was aided and abetted by the master of Eastdene. He took a great fancy to the little slim, blue-eyed fairy, made a play-fellow and pet of her, and as she grew older became her willing and devoted slave, ready to do anything—no matter how preposterous or absurd—that she ordered him to do; and before she had turned thirteen she showed what a capricious creature she was—what a true woman, a true descendant of our common mother and her namesake, Eve.

Miss Sophie, though she secretly approved of the haughty, proud spirit of the child displayed, would fain have checked it a little with an eye to the future, only Jack would not allow a word of reproof to be addressed to her.

She was omnipotent with him, therefore it might almost be said that she was mistress of Eastdene. At any rate, she did exactly as she liked, and ordered what she liked. Had a white pony to drive and a black pony to ride, kept a brace of dogs, a big mastiff Juno, and a little terrier Jupiter, and a Manx cat, and a parrot that swore abominably, and used most profane language; and she learnt very little from the grand Parisian governess Miss Sophie procured for her. And when expostulated with for running down to the seashore, or following the beagles, or riding on Negro with Jack to the meets, she would smile up into her stern elderly cousin's eyes, and say, "The air is good for my complexion, aunt," for, like Jack, she called her aunt. And Miss Mortimer, looking at the damask cheek and clear sparkling eyes, would be silenced; for, after all, the gospel she preached to the child was that of the best way to preserve her great good looks. And as Jack liked to have her with him when he angled or had his beagles out or rode to hounds the old ladies found themselves nowhere, completely overpowered by the young folks. And Eve gradually got her own way in everything until she became quite unaccustomed to contradiction, and intolerant of any crossing or balking of her wishes or desires, which was hardly to be wondered at, seeing how terribly she was spoiled. Still, in spite of her faults, and perhaps they were grave ones, she was so bright and winsome, so brilliantly beautiful, that it was impossible not to love her, or to resist her coaxing, fascinating ways.

So things went on until she was seventeen, and then a little shadow fell across the sunlit glory of her pathway.

It was a day or two after she attained that age; and Jack, who had been detained longer than usual after breakfast in the stables, came round to the front of the house, and looking through the window of the morning-room, where his two aunts sat working, asked where Eve was.

"She went out to the garden half-an-hour ago!" Pussy told him, smiling adoringly at the tall, sunburnt, stalwart man, who was her ideal of all that was manly and handsome.

"I don't see her!" he said, shading his eyes from the April sunshine with one hand, as he glanced round the garden, already decked with many a spring bloom and early blossom.

"Perhaps she is in the wigwam!" suggested Miss Sophie, for she had repeatedly told the girl if she took her book of poems or harmless novel into the garden to read that she was not to expose her fair skin to the freckling blaze of the sun; and so the quaint thatched hut, with its primitive

chairs and table, was a favourite haunt with her. One side being open she could get a fine view of the country, and yet was secure from sunburn or freckles.

"I'll go and see," said Jack, rather eagerly, turning away and striding over the soft turf, all the more eagerly because he spied Jupiter stretched out at her ease before the wigwam, and the brute lashed the ground with her great tail, and lazily regarded the intruder as he entered the hut.

There was nothing there save the table and chairs, a book of Shelley's poems, and a white sunshade carelessly tossed down in a corner.

Jack uttered an impatient exclamation, and went on to the orchard, threading his way through beds of violets, and then striding under the crooked apple trees, and the blossom-budding pear trees.

Still, nowhere could he see beautiful Eve Everton—not even get a glimpse of her blue gown.

"Where can she be?" he muttered, impatiently, looking round everywhere, a pained sort of look in his grey eyes; and then, as if in answer to his half-angry query, he caught, through the vista of the young-leaved trees, a glimpse of the blue, dancing ocean, that sparkled and flashed with diamond-like brilliancy in the sun's rays.

"I know," he cried aloud. "She has gone to the temple."

Now, the temple was a sort of summer-house and observatory combined, that the former owner of Eastdene had built at the extreme limit of his demesne, on the edge of a high cliff overlooking the English Channel, from which elevated and breezy eyry he could watch the ships going down or coming up, and make meteorological observations. It was of white marble, and was built on a grassy knoll, up to which led a flight of marble steps.

Inside it was furnished with eastern things, and hung with rich-coloured eastern stuffs, and it was a favourite retreat of Eve's—dividing the honours with the wigwam—only, perhaps, the temple had the advantage, because it was some distance from the house, and rather far for Miss Sophie to visit often.

Jack walking rapidly, yet softly, his foot-falls falling noiselessly on the short, thick grass, saw Eve sitting on the lowest step, her blue dress contrasting strongly with its whiteness. Her sailor-hat lay beside her full of wild spring-blossoms, and the sun beat down mercilessly on her uncovered head, and made the silky threads of her hair look like living gold!

Her blue eyes were fixed on the wide, perfectly smooth expanse of silvery sand below, and the sea flecked with white-crested, restless waves, and the gulls that floated on it, and the great ships that were sailing down, away to other lands, and the azure sky that bent over all, like a vast sapphire dome.

It was an exquisite scene, and she seemed to find it so, and well worth contemplating, and the young man seemed to find her charming profile ditto, and there they remained some time—she, quite unconscious of his close proximity, and he oblivious of everything save the beauty that held his glance.

Then, suddenly, without any warning or apparent cause, except it was the sight of a brown-sailed coble steering homewards, laden with its inhabitants of the deep, she threw back her head and began to sing that strange, weird air, "The Clang of the Wooden Shoon."

As Jack listened to the clear, full voice; and the "wild, sweet strain," a spell seemed to fall on him—a curious feeling took possession of him,

It appeared to him that it was not Eve, the girl he had received into his house ten years before that was singing, whom he had known nearly all her life, but some stranger—some lovely, witching stranger—who, by reason of her sweet music drew the life from his veins, the reason from his brain, made his usually tranquil pulses throb at racing speed, as they had never throbbled before, in all his commonplace, respectable, unromantic life.

Of course he had heard her sing before—in the morning-room at Eastdene when she practised, and in the drawing-room now and then of an evening when she performed to please his aunt more than himself, for he was ordinarily not very enthusiastic over music, but he had never heard her sing like this—in a wild, weird, entrancing fashion. And he stood there dumb, and motionless, and probably would have continued to stand there for hours had she continued to sing; only she ceased as abruptly as she had commenced, and turning her head saw Jordan.

"Why, Jack, what have you followed me here for? What do you want?" she asked.

"What a queer song!" he rejoined, irrelevantly, shaking off the curious feeling that possessed him with a little shuddering motion of his shoulders, and throwing himself down on the steps at her side.

"Queer! I think it is charming!" she told him.

"Perhaps. Only it is curious, and—uncommon."

"That is why I like it. I hate singing the songs hundreds of dozens of other women sing—or murder. I like something novel."

"Yes, naturally. I have never heard you sing it before!" he added, his eyes meeting those deep blue ones, that reflected the sky's wondrous hue.

"No, the aunts don't like it."

"Why not?"

"They say it is a weird, uncanny air."

"I am inclined to agree with them."

"Indeed," she remarked, with a slight air of pique. "You don't often take their part against me."

"Not often. I think I spoil you, child."

Yet even as he uttered the word he knew she was no longer a child, that she was a woman, and probably had a woman's thoughts and fancies, for all the sweet, serene calm of her manner and ways.

"You all do," she acknowledged smilingly; for though she hardly knew or understood the extent of her obligations to Jack and his aunts as the exact state of affairs had been rigidly kept from her, as well as the fact that her own income amounted to exactly thirty pounds per annum, still she felt that they had done a great deal for her, in the mere fact of taking her to live in their beautiful home and surrounding her with countless luxuries.

"Do you like being spoiled?" he queried, his eyes fixed on the long dusky lashes that swept the fair cheek lovingly.

"Yes. I could never do without it. I think I should die if I had not some one to love and look after me. Mustn't it be awful to be quite alone in the world, with no one to care for you, or to take an interest in you and your doings, no one whom you could pain or please?"

"Surely, Eve," he expostulated, a ring of gravity in his deep tones, "you would not like to pain any one?"

"I don't know," she laughed, "the red lips parting over the white teeth, a hundred pretty dimples starting into life. "I think I might. It must be a proud feeling for a woman to know that she can sway and influence a man—a great strong, clever man, ever so much older and better than herself, who will be happy if she smiles, and miser-

able if she frowns. I think it must be grand to possess such power, and I should like to exercise it—sometimes. It would be so amusing you know, Jack," looking at him with those lovely, starry eyes, that were beautiful enough to have knocked virtue and sense out of even St. Anthony's wise pate.

"And so cruel," he said, quietly, as he rose, and stood towering above her. "I pity the fellow that falls in love with you, Eve!"

"Thank you!" she retorted, angrily, a warm flush rising to her cheeks. "When the fellow or a fellow does fall in love with me I daresay he will be able to dispense with your pity!"

"Doubtless—at first; until he finds out your nice little ideas as regards his treatment."

"Pooh! My lover, when I get one, I am sure will be quite satisfied with me, and all I do—satisfied with me just as I am!"

"Your lover!"

Jack went white to the lips as he uttered these words. Then recovering himself he said, carelessly,—

"I am going a fishing. Will you come with me, my child!"

"No, I don't think I will," she told him, poutingly. "We shall quarrel, and then you will say nasty things to me!"

"As you please," he replied, indifferently, as he turned away and left her,

### CHAPTER III.

FROM that day on the cliff by the temple, when Eve told Jack how she would triumph in her power over a strong man, and spoke of a probable lover, a shadow fell between them—an intangible something that banished for ever the old, free intercourse.

They quarrelled frequently, or, to speak more properly, she quarrelled with him on every possible occasion, and about everything and next to nothing, and he seemed quite hurt at her sharp speeches, and withdrew more and more from her society, which made her all the angrier, and he did not appear to be quite so ready as of yore to fetch and carry for her, or so desirous of her company when he went a fishing, or had the beagles out; and she took offence at this, and all the old happy friendship was at an end between them.

He was ceremoniously and coldly polite. She was cross, and never lost an opportunity of saying something disagreeable to him; so they saw little of each other, and seldom spoke except to utter formal commonplaces, or disagreeable snubs.

Miss Sophie was hardly sorry when she saw the friendship between the cousins break up.

She had entertained vague fears that her projects for a coronet to adorn Eve's fair brow might come to nought; and, besides, she lived in a constant state of terror lest Eve's face might in any way become tanned, or chapped, or flushed by some of the many pursuits she had adopted at Jack's instigation, though her flawlessly beautiful skin seemed proof against wind, weather, or sun.

After the break Eve kept more in the house, drove in the carriage with the old ladies, and eschewed fishing, coursing, hunting, and other things she had indulged in.

She still took long rides on her beautiful chestnut mare, Princess—an animal Jack had presented to her on her sixteenth birthday, telling her she had grown too big for Negro, with whom she reluctantly parted as a saddle horse, driving him in double harness with Snowball, his white brother, and ere long she realised what a great exchange it was.

She and the Princess soon came to understand each other, and many delightful hours



they spent together galloping over the Sussex downs, horse and rider looking like one, so perfect was her seat, so faultless the animal's step and action.

If Jack did not like these long solitary rides she took, and sometimes, in secret, regretted having given her the means to indulge this whim, he was wise enough to hold his peace, and not make any remarks.

Experience had taught him that it was worse than useless, for it only irritated her into further rebellion, and long rides.

As for Miss Sophie and Miss Mary they were like puppets in her slim young hands. She pulled the strings and they danced according to her fancy—that was all.

They seemed to have no will of their own where she was concerned. And what wonder, for if they attempted to argue or advise she would twine her arms round them, lay a soft cheek against theirs, and coax and coax until a heart of stone would have softened and melted.

And so the end of it all was that Eve went her own way, and did just as she pleased, and took tremendously long rides alone, bringing the Princess home to her stable sometimes wearied out, and with hanging head and panting flank, though usually she was most kind and considerate to dumb brutes.

One summer afternoon when she had ridden a long way along the coast, she heard a faint cry for help, and reining in her horse she listened to hear from which direction it came.

As she paused it sounded again straight before her, near the edge of the cliff, and looking she saw a handkerchief waving. She rode forward at once, and there, lying on the ground close by a stone wall that ran out to the edge, and barred progress, by the cliff path lay a young man, who from his attitude and the extreme pallor of his countenance had evidently met with an accident.

"What is the matter? Are you much hurt?" asked Miss Everton, springing from her horse with the ease and agility of one frequently in the saddle.

"I jumped that wall like a fool," replied the stranger, "and, missing my footing, fell, and have either severely sprained or broken my ankle. I can't tell which."

"Can you stand?"

"I don't think so."

"If, by any means, you could mount my horse, the 'Black Bull Inn' is only half a mile away; you could ride there, and get a carriage to take you home!" suggested Eve.

"Yes; if," he smiled through all his pain, looking up into the lovely blue eyes, bent on him so pityingly. "Only I could never get my foot into the stirrup."

"Princess will kneel down. You might mount then," for Eve and the old groom at Eastdene had taught the mare the somewhat circus-like trick of kneeling down, and letting her would-be rider mount while she was in that position, and the girl had often found it of use when she dismounted on her lonely country rides, and there was no stone or low wall convenient.

"Will she let me mount her while she kneels?" asked the young man, casting a somewhat uncertain glance at the beautiful mare, who was twitching her ears restlessly.

"Yes; if I tell her to," and touching her knees with her whip, Eve spoke to her, and the animal knelt down obediently.

"Let me help you," said the girl, as he made a futile effort to rise; and putting her strong, young hand under his arm she helped him. And then, with considerable difficulty, he got on to the horse, sitting sideways, the injured foot, which was the right one, supported partly by his leg being over the pommel.

He turned so deathly white with the pain and exertion that she thought he was going to faint, and kept her hand against him while the Princess rose gently to her feet; but in a moment or two he recovered somewhat, and taking the bridle in one hand, and gathering up her habit in the other, she strode off in the direction of the "Black Bull," the intelligent animal regulating her pace to her mistress's.

"I can never thank you enough for succouring me!" began the young man, glancing down at his beautiful companion, whose brilliant, flower-like face attracted his glance in a magnetic sort of fashion.

"It is nothing," returned Eve, looking up at the dark countenance above her, which she noticed now, for the first time, was an uncommonly good-looking one.

"Nothing!" echoed the stranger. "To me it is a very great deal, I assure you. I might have lain there until nightfall, or even all through the night, had you not come to rescue me. It is a lonely place. I have not seen anyone pass since I met with this mishap, though that is some time ago."

"How long have you been lying there?" inquired Miss Everton.

"Over two hours."

"And in great pain, of course?"

"Terrible. At first, I think, I became insensible for the only time in my life that I can remember. I have never been such an outrageous fool before."

"I don't see that that is being a fool," returned the girl, gravely. "Why should not a man feel pain of that sort as keenly as a woman?"

"I hardly know," he said, looking at her again. "Only men are supposed to be able to bear pain better than women."

"An erroneous supposition, I am sure. It is well-known that women are better and more amenable patients than men."

"Perhaps. Only before men become patients they are certainly harder and less easy to hurt than the fair ones of the creation."

"I am not sure on that point either," Eve told him, for being unused to opposition to any opinion of hers, it made her all the more eager to convince him that she was right and he wrong. "My theory is that your sex think it manly to make a brave show, and hide their pain, if possible."

"Oh! then you indulge in theories?"

"Yes. I think with many men the great idea is to be manly, not to show the white feather, not to appear weak or womanish, no matter what the occasion, or what the agony endured."

"I believe you are right," he agreed, with an involuntary moan, for he was suffering tortures, which he would willingly have concealed from his fair companion.

"I know I am," she said, quietly. "At the present time, if you were a woman and not ashamed of such a performance, you would faint, slide off the Princess's back, and remain insensible until your foot had been attended to, and made tolerably comfortable. As it is, being a man, you exert your will to rule over your body, and achieve a triumph of mind over matter."

"I think I should like to do anything that would render me insensible to this pain for a little while," he acknowledged, frankly.

"It is dreadful for you," she said, looking up at him sympathetically, "but it is not very far now. There is the 'Black Bull,' pointing with her whip at a quaint, galleried, gable ended old house that stood fifty yards further on down the road.

"Yes. Only I have to get on to Hurst from there," he rejoined, rather dismally.

"You will be more comfortable in a carriage, and of course can go quicker, and

perhaps Mrs. Toms could give you some thing to relieve the pain for the present. She is celebrated for her ointments and nostrums!"

"I shall ask her aid then," he said, as they stopped before the inn, and an ostler came forward and then the landlord, Mr. Toms, and helped the stranger off the mare, and almost carried him between them into the bar-parlour.

Miss Everton did not wait to see if Mrs. Toms' remedies alleviated the young man's sufferings. Aunt Sophie's ideas on the subject of propriety was rather, not to say very strict, and Eve had played the part of a good Samaritan to him. She had not "passed by on the other side," but had helped him to a place where he could get assistance and be well cared for. So she led the mare to the old mounting-stone in the middle of the yard, and springing from it into the saddle a moment later was cantering off to Eastdene, where she arrived only just in time to slip out of her riding gear, and get into a cool, white muslin gown before the dinner bell rang.

Jack looked rather stern as he sat at the foot of the table, for she had been out since one o'clock, and he disapproved immensely of her being out so long by herself, and his look roused a demon of mischief in her breast. She determined to tease him without appearing to do it intentionally.

"Who lives at Hurst?" she asked, innocently, looking at Miss Sophie inquiringly.

"No one, my dear. The place has been uninhabited for years."

"To whom does it belong?"

"One of the Fitzroys."

"Who are they?"

"The Duke of Hampstead's family."

"I hear Lord James Fitzroy is going to pay his property a visit," observed Jack. "He is to come down some time this month."

"He has already come!" said Eve, sweetly.

"How do you know?" asked Jordan, a trifle sharply.

"Because I met him to-day!"

"Where?"

"In Bank Plain Meadow! And spoke to him!" she added, coolly.

"But!" exclaimed Jack, in angry bewilderment, "you don't know him!"

"I did not know him! I do now!" she corrected, quietly.

"Really, Eve, you ought not to take these long rides alone. It is not right. No wonder this young man spoke to you!"

"He did not speak to me!" she corrected again with the utmost suavity. "It was the other way about! I spoke to him!"

"Eve!"

"I did, really!"

"I can hardly believe it!"

"It is the truth, really! Ask Mrs. Toms of the 'Black Bull'! She saw us together!"

"Dear Eve, will you not explain?" asked Pussy gently, reading aright the stormy signs in Jack's grey eyes.

"Certainly, dear aunt, if you wish me to!"

"I do very much."

"Then—I have had quite a romantic little adventure this afternoon. Instead of being rescued from a position of peril and distress by a handsome prince, I rescued the prince from a very awkward and unpleasant predicament!"

"How, my dear?" queried Miss Mary, while the other two displayed the liveliest attention, especially Jack, though he did his best to conceal it.

"In Bank Plain Meadow, lying near the edge of the cliff, I saw a young man, frantically waving a handkerchief. Of course I rode up to see what he wanted, and found that he had broken or dislocated his ankle,

leaping the wall. He could hardly move. But after some time I managed to get him on Princess's back, and conducted him to the 'Black Bull,' where I left him to the care of the Toms's."

"How do you know he lives at Hurst?" inquired Miss Sophie, a little flutter of excitement disturbing the ordinary calm of her mature bosom.

"Because he grumbled at the distance that lay between the inn and Hurst, so I concluded that was his domicile!"

"Did he know who you were?" asked Jack, coldly.

"I did not tell him my name; but no doubt he will easily be able to find it out from Mrs. Toms if he wants to know!" returned Eve, carelessly, as she rose from the table; and walking to the windows that stood open began feeding a pair of peacocks that were strutting about on the terrace with dainty crumbs of sweet cake, that they seemed to appreciate a great deal more than Jack did her words.

"I suppose we shall have the fellow calling here?" he muttered, angrily, as he strode out of the room, and sought the solitude of his den, where he strove to soothe his perturbed feelings by the help of a pipe.

#### CHAPTER IV.

JACK was not wrong in his surmise. A week later a splendid carriage, drawn by a pair of high-stepping, handsome bays came dashing along the drive, and drew up before the door at Eastdene, and from it alighted a tall, dark young man, who walked lame, and assisted himself along by the aid of a stout crutch-handled stick.

Miss Sophie's heart gave a sudden bound as the footman announced Lord James Fitzroy, and she rose to receive her aristocratic guest with something less than her usual well-bred calm of manner.

"I hope you will excuse this intrusion," he began, bowing over the hand she extended; "but I felt bound to come and tender my thanks to your niece, Miss Everton, for her kind help the other day when I was disabled."

"It is no intrusion," murmured Miss Sophie, devoutly hoping that Eve, who had wandered out into the garden, would come in before the young lordling left.

"She is your niece?" he added, inquiry in his dark eyes. "The Toms' told me she was; only sometimes these sort of people get hold of the wrong facts."

Lord James was very much struck with Eve, and the memory of her beautiful, brilliant face had haunted him during the week.

Nevertheless, he would infinitely prefer to hear that she was related to the Mortimers of Eastdene, and not a mere paid companion or adopted child.

"Miss Everton is really our cousin; only, being so much our junior, we have brought her up as our niece, and taught her to regard us in the light of aunts, as her cousin Jack does."

"I see," said Lord James, mentally wondering what cousin Jack was like, whether he was a boy or grown up, and likely to prove a rival. "Don't think me impertinent asking you, only I am quite a stranger here. I have not visited Hurst for eighteen years!"

"No. I remember it is a long time since the house was inhabited."

"I find it in rather a dilapidated condition in consequence."

"I suppose so."

"Yes. I mean to have part of it refurbished and renovated."

"You mean to make a long stay in the neighbourhood, then, I presume?"

"I mean to make Hurst my headquarters,"

he rejoined, enthusiastically. "I like the neighbourhood immensely; and I have grown tired of town and foreign countries. I shall just settle down and look after the estate."

"It will be a very good thing for your people."

"I hope it may be," he rejoined, modestly. "I want to make many improvements—I find there is room for them. Ah! Miss Everton!" as Eve, quite unaware a stranger was present, strolled into the room from the conservatory, followed by Jupiter and Juno, the former of whom commenced a furious onslaught at once on the visitor; but, finding himself unsupported by his huge, stately, and better-tempered companion, wisely retreated under Miss Sophie's voluminous skirts. "I have come to try and thank you for all your kindness to me last week; though I know I can never find words adequate to expressing my feelings."

"Pray don't try to," she said, simply, not in the least embarrassed by his presence or admiring gaze. "No one could have done less than try to help you when you were helpless."

"Not many would have taken the trouble, or have let me mount such a beautiful animal! My gratitude to the Princess is only second to that I feel towards you. You are lucky to possess such a horse!"

"She is a beauty, isn't she?" agreed Eve, delighted at the praise bestowed on her favourite. "I am glad she was the means of helping you out of an awkward predicament. Your foot was not so much injured as you imagined, as you are able to get about now?"

"No; the bones were not broken, fortunately—a severe sprain. I hope in another week to be able to ride and walk as well as ever I have."

"I hope you may be!" smiled Eve.

"It is unwise to do too much while the foot is weak," put in Miss Sophie, sententiously. "Nothing like rest for a sprain."

"Oh, I have had plenty of rest," he laughed. "I have done nothing but lounge on a sofa in the library all day, and my valet, a herculean Alsatian, has carried me up to my room at night as though I was a puling infant of a few pounds weight."

"What a useful person to have in the house on an emergency!" remarked Miss Everton, looking at the offspring of a dual father, and contrasting the extremeness of his attire, and the faultless cut of his coat, with Jack's somewhat untidy and countrified appearance.

"He is invaluable!" allowed his lordship. "I do not know what I should do without him, especially now, at Hurst, where things are in a state of confusion. I hardly know how my sister will like the house in its present condition. Not at all, I fancy, as she is accustomed to all the comforts of a modern town dwelling."

"You expect some of your family, then, to stay with you?" returned Miss Sophie, all eagerness to learn all she could in a polite way from this young man, whose dark eyes spoke eloquently every time they rested on Eve's beautiful face.

"Yes. My sister, Lady Augusta, comes down next week."

"Will she make a long stay?"

"I hope so!" said Lord James. "I want her to stay with me through the summer and autumn. I am going to have the house full in the shooting season. Some of my preserves want shooting over sadly. They are overstocked."

"It is so long since the house has been inhabited."

"True. I was ten years old when my father brought me last to Hurst to see the inheritance his brother had left me. We did

not stay long. The Duke does not like the place." His son did not say why, did not even hint, of course, at the dark story connected with the old Tudor mansion—a story of shame, and ruin, and death, self-sought in one of its huge, dark, oak-panelled chambers, when the Duke's brother went to face his Maker, and the unhappy victim of his base, unbridled passions. "And as there are plenty of other places in the family at his disposal, he never came down here again; and it was a whim of his not to have it let to strangers, a whim I have humoured since I came of age, and had the management of affairs in my own hands, though I confess it was an extravagant fancy, and one that has made me some thousands of pounds the poorer."

"So I suppose," assented Miss Sophie. "Such a place as Hurst, if let, would bring in a handsome rental."

"Yes. Only the land has been well farmed. So, on the whole, I am not so much of a loser."

"You are fortunate!"

"I think so."

"And so do I," observed Eve. "It must be delightful to possess an old house like Hurst, where ancestors have lived, sorrowed, and joyed, been happy or miserable according to their deserts, and lived their lives in the same rooms you now inhabit—"

"Or died in them," muttered the young man, a dark shade falling over his handsome, Velasquez-like face.

"That are full," continued the girl, enthusiastically, "of relics, and reminiscences of them—their portraits, their chairs and tables, their nicknacks of a bygone age, and a hundred other things!"

"And their spirits sometimes," interpolated the young man as she paused, in a cynical tone.

"Do you mean their ghosts?" she queried, breathlessly, her great blue eyes fixed on his face—a delighted, yet fearful expression in their clear depths.

"Yes."

"Have you a ghost—a real ghost—at Hurst?" she cried.

"It is said so."

"Oh, I should like to see it!"

"I have no wish that way," he replied, with a sullen laugh.

"Whose is it? Do tell me!"

"Oh, a wicked ancestor," he rejoined, "who for crimes committed on earth is not permitted to rest in his grave."

"I wonder whether it is true? Whether the ghost ever has been seen?"

"You may have an opportunity of judging for yourself, Miss Everton. I hope when my sister comes down that you will honour Hurst with your presence. May I bring my sister to call on you, Miss Mortimer?" turning to that lady with a graceful supplication in his manner.

"We shall be delighted to see Lady Augusta!" returned Miss Sophie, in her best manner, though her heart, foolish and old perhaps, yet still permeated to the core, with the ambitious hopes of her youth for Eve, fluttered like a caged bird, and throbbed in her ample bosom as though ready to burst with joy at the prospect of receiving Lady Augusta Fitzroy as a visitor.

"I shall like to see Hurst very much!" said Eve, simply, not sharing in the least her aunt's ambitious hopes and fancies.

"I hope you will not be disappointed when you do see it!" observed Lord James, as he rose to take his leave.

That night at dinner the conversation turned wholly and solely on the topic of the Fitzroys.

They were discussed from the time the title was created in the reign of Henry the Seventh down to the present day, while



Lord James came in for a particularly large dose of remark and criticism from the ladies. Jack was very silent, it might almost be said grumpy, and after having granted an acknowledgment of having heard Miss Sophie's information respecting his lordship's visit he maintained an obstinate silence until dessert was placed on the table, and the servants had withdrawn, and then, in a sarcastic and disagreeable voice, he inquired,—

"Can't the subject be changed? Surely we have had enough and to spare about the Duke of Hampstead and his numerous family. I for one can dispense with any further information with regard to them."

"Jack, my dear!" exclaimed Pussy, solicitously. "I am afraid you are not quite well. You look so pale. Do take a glass of port!"

"No, thank you. I am only suffering from a plethora of Fitzroy."

"Or has Molly been unkind to-day?" inquired Eve, mischievously, a twinkle in her large eyes, as she fixed them on his angry face.

"Molly be—" exclaimed the young man, savagely flinging down the stalk of the strawberry he had just demolished.

"Is her father inexorable? Won't he give his consent to your union and make you happy?" continued his tormentor.

"Confound it! Can't you leave the girl's name alone?" and, pushing back his chair violently, Jack stamped out of the room in high dudgeon.

"Poor boy!" laughed his cousin, for the hopeless love of Molly Diff, the bailiff's daughter, for her father's master was well-known, and was a source of amusement to Eve and annoyance to him. Only—he had never appeared so much annoyed before; and Eve wondered a little that night as she sat at the piano, running her hands idly over the keys and singing tiny snatches of song, why he had been so put out, and why he did not come and turn over the leaves for her as he usually did, and ask her to sing his favourite songs, and make much of her as was his wont.

Only no Jack appeared, and the evening appearing uncommonly long, she went to bed early and dreamt of strawberries and strawberry-leaved coronets, and dukes, and ghosts, and a variety of queer things.

Lord James did not let the grass grow under his feet. Next day an artistically-arranged basket of fruit was brought to Eastdene by a groom in the Hampstead livery for Miss Everton, and two days later a bouquet of roses, and then a huge salmon, with a few lines from his lordship, begging her acceptance of his leviathan of the deep, and saying it had been caught by his brother Clarence in one of the rivers of his father's Scotch estate.

Miss Everton serenely accepted these evidences of the young man's gratitude and admiration, though Jack was for sending them back or pitching them into the dust-bin; and the two old ladies rejoiced exceedingly to think that their pretty Eve had achieved such a conquest—for conquest they knew it to be when Lady Augusta Fitzroy, the eldest daughter of the Duke of Hampstead, drove up with her brother one afternoon to pay them a visit, and was cordial to the utmost extent of her power. Only she was such a frozen icicle of an aristocrat that she could not thaw to any great extent, or appear very natural.

She was more human to Jack, who did not at all appreciate her attentions, than she was to anyone else; and when she gave Eve an invitation to dinner for that day week she included Jack, slightly to her brother's annoyance, for he had supposed Jordan to be a much older man, and hardly regarded

his well-made and stalwart proportions with kindly eyes. He was good-looking enough to prove a rival, his lordship thought, and he did not want a rival. He preferred a clear field for himself.

"Why did you ask that fellow Jordan?" he began, pettishly, as soon as they were in the carriage again.

"Miss Everton could not come alone!" replied Lady Augusta, evasively, colouring a little.

"There are the Miss Mortimers!"

"The elder one told me she never went out at night."

"They might have made an exception in our favour. It is summer time. It would be different in the winter."

"The young man will be an acquisition."

"Oh, you think so?" laughed her brother.

"Yes. Decidedly!"

"They are a handsome family."

"Very. Miss Everton is lovely!"

"High praise from one young woman of another," said Lord James, gratefully.

"I am always just," she rejoined, with a touch of that intense and icy pride that she generally reserved for strangers and those lower in the social scale than herself.

"Do you think the Duke would approve?" he queried, with some hesitation.

"Possibly. She is not your equal, of course. Still, there is the aristocracy of beauty, and she is rarely beautiful!"

"I have never seen such a face!" he cried, passionately. "It haunts me. I shall not feel happy, not feel certain, until I have gained a promise from her lips, an assurance that I may hope."

"You have made up your mind, then? You mean to marry?" remarked Lady Augusta, turning her cold eyes on him with just a shade of surprise in their placid depths.

"Yes. If she will accept me," he rejoined, a trifle sullenly.

"And have you counted the cost of this proceeding?" she asked, after a perceptible pause.

"Yes, I have counted the cost," he repeated, still sullenly, and keeping his dark face turned away.

"You have thought of everything? Considered everything?"

"I have considered everything."

"Of course it was necessary for Drummond to marry. He is the eldest son-and-heir to the title. But is it wise for you?"

"Of course it is," he interrupted with a passionate burst of anger, that seemed to frighten her a little. "Why should I be shut out from every joy? Why should I be condemned to live a wretched, lonely, miserable life? Why, I envy the labourers on my estate when I see them with their wives and children. They have something to live for. I have nothing. A dead blank seems to face me, and I will not bear it. I will be happy. She—she—need never know anything!"

"No, no. Certainly not," agreed his sister, quickly; "and since you have made up your mind, James, let me wish you every success in your wooing, and a speedy and happy termination to it."

"Thanks, dear!" he said, more quietly, as he kissed her.

#### CHAPTER V.

"THIS is the haunted chamber, Miss Everton!" cried Lord James, throwing wide the door of a great dark room, in one corner of which was a huge four-post bed, canopied and draped with purple brocade, and surmounted by nodding ostrich plumes, that gave it the appearance of a hearse. In another corner was a curious massive wardrobe, of the time of Elizabeth. In the window was a carved oak table, with a swing

mirror; another stood by the bedside, and on it were a pair of quaint silver candlesticks.

There were several heavy chairs upholstered in purple brocade, and over the tall mantel-shelf was the portrait of a gallant, with peaked beard and ruff, and above the picture a pair of rapiers were crossed, and on either side a dagger, while an old gothic clock hung on the wall, conveniently placed for the occupant of the bed to see it.

"What do you think of it?"

"That it is rather a gruesome place!" she said, with a laugh that ended in a shudder. "The sort of place where a murder or some such horrible crime might have been committed!"

"Perhaps a murder has been perpetrated here!" said the master of Hurst, slowly, his dark eyes wandering round the room in a curious fashion. "Who knows?" with a queer laugh. "It often seems to me to be peopled with spirits!"

"Don't be ridiculous, James!" said Lady Augusta, sharply, who had followed them into the room with Jack. "It is a hideous old place, and the furniture and appointments atrocious. Only to suppose there is anything supernatural about it is worse than childish. It is absolutely wrong. Take my advice. Let Maple's men loose in it, with orders to entirely renovate and renew, and then see what a different aspect it will wear—how much cheerier and pleasanter!"

"I think I will take your advice," said her brother, slowly, his eyes fixed on a dark corner near the wardrobe, while Jack's eyes were fixed on him, an expression on half angry, half pitying on his good-natured face.

"What do you say, Miss Everton?" turning to her.

"I quite agree with Lady Augusta. I think the room would be better modernised and brightened."

"Then it shall be done."

"I shall look forward to seeing it under its newer and prettier aspect," she said, cheerfully, taking her cue from Lady Augusta, and refraining from indulging her rather morbid fancy for occult things and gruesome old places.

She was beginning to get accustomed to something just a little bit curious about her titled admirer, and to the fact of his sister often turning the conversation when it took a dismal or creepy character, to his abstraction and wandering looks.

She had seen a good deal of him during the past two months, and of his big Tudor house, only she had never seen the haunted room before.

Lady Augusta managed that, though this day Lord James had escaped her surveillance, and led Eve in triumph to this Bluebeard chamber that he seemed so proud of, though it was equally clear her lordship did not share his pride.

Eve was not sorry when the others appeared. She feared a proposal from his lordship, and was not quite prepared with her answer, did not quite know whether she would say "yea" or "nay!"—lift him to the highest pinnacle of joy, or dash him down to the lowest depths of misery.

Now, the girl was not a coquette, and did not wish to play on the young man's feelings, but she had been forced into her present unpleasant and somewhat false position by circumstances, and the conduct of those around her.

In the first place Lord James haunted her like a shadow. In the second place, Miss Sophie and Miss Mary talked unceasingly of her grand prospects and what she ought to do when she became Lady James Fitzroy, and the grand gowns she would require in

leaping the wall. He could hardly move. But after some time I managed to get him on Princess's back, and conducted him to the 'Black Bull,' where I left him to the care of the Toms's."

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he rejoined, enthusiastically. "I like the neighbourhood immensely; and I have grown tired of town and foreign countries. I shall just settle down and look after the estate."

"It will be a very good thing for your people."

"I hope it may be," he rejoined, modestly. "I want to make many improvements—I find there is room for them. Ah! Miss Everton!" as Eve, quite unaware a stranger was present, strolled into the room from the conservatory, followed by Jupiter and Juno, the former of whom commenced a furious onslaught at once on the visitor; but, finding himself unsupported by his huge, stately, and better-tempered companion, wisely retreated under Miss Sophie's voluminous skirts. "I have come to try and thank you for all your kindness to me last week; though I know I can never find words adequate to expressing my feelings."

"Pray don't try to," she said, simply, not in the least embarrassed by his presence or admiring gaze. "No one could have done less than try to help you when you were helpless."

"Not many would have taken the trouble, or have let me mount such a beautiful animal! My gratitude to the Princess is only second to that I feel towards you. You are lucky to possess such a horse!"

"She is a beauty, isn't she?" agreed Eve, delighted at the praise bestowed on her favourite. "I am glad she was the means of helping you out of an awkward predicament. Your foot was not so much injured as you imagined, as you are able to get about now?"

"No; the bones were not broken, fortunately—a severe sprain. I hope in another week to be able to ride and walk as well as ever I have."

"I hope you may be!" smiled Eve.

"It is unwise to do too much while the foot is weak," put in Miss Sophie, sententiously. "Nothing like rest for a sprain."

"Oh, I have had plenty of rest," he laughed. "I have done nothing but lounge on a sofa in the library all day, and my valet, a herculean Alsatian, has carried me up to my room at night as though I was a puling infant of a few pounds weight."

"What a useful person to have in the house on an emergency!" remarked Miss Everton, looking at the offspring of a ducal father, and contrasting the extremeness of his attire, and the faultless cut of his coat, with Jack's somewhat untidy and coutrilled appearance.

"He is invaluable!" allowed his lordship. "I do not know what I should do without him, especially now, at Hurst, where things are in a state of confusion. I hardly know how my sister will like the house in its present condition. Not at all, I fancy, as she is accustomed to all the comforts of a modern town dwelling."

"You expect some of your family, then, to stay with you?" returned Miss Sophie, all eagerness to learn all she could in a polite way from this young man, whose dark eyes spoke eloquently every time they rested on Eve's beautiful face.

"Yes. My sister, Lady Augusta, comes down next week."

"Will she make a long stay?"

"I hope so!" said Lord James. "I want her to stay with me through the summer and autumn. I am going to have the house full in the shooting season. Some of my preserves want shooting over sadly. They are overstocked."

"It is so long since the house has been inhabited."

"True. I was ten years old when my father brought me last to Hurst to see the inheritance his brother had left me. We did

not stay long. The Duke does not like the place." His son did not say why, did not even hint, of course, at the dark story connected with the old Tudor mansion—a story of shame, and ruin, and death, self-sought in one of its huge, dark, oak-panelled chambers, when the Duke's brother went to face his Maker, and the unhappy victim of his base, unbridled passions. "And as there are plenty of other places in the family at his disposal, he never came down here again; and it was a whim of his not to have it let to strangers, a whim I have humoured since I came of age, and had the management of affairs in my own hands, though I confess it was an extravagant fancy, and one that has made me some thousands of pounds the poorer."

"So I suppose," assented Miss Sophie. "Such a place as Hurst, if let, would bring in a handsome rental."

"Yes. Only the land has been well farmed. So, on the whole, I am not so much of a loser."

"You are fortunate!"

"I think so."

"And so do I," observed Eve. "It must be delightful to possess an old house like Hurst, where ancestors have lived, sorrowed, and joyed, been happy or miserable according to their deserts, and lived their lives in the same rooms you now inhabit—"

"Or died in them," muttered the young man, a dark shade falling over his handsome, Velasquez-like face.

"That are full," continued the girl, enthusiastically, "of relics, and reminiscences of them—their portraits, their chairs and tables, their nicknacks of a bygone age, and a hundred other things!"

"And their spirits sometimes," interpolated the young man as she paused, in a cynical tone.

"Do you mean their ghosts?" she queried, breathlessly, her great blue eyes fixed on his face—a delighted, yet fearful expression in their clear depths.

"Yes."

"Have you a ghost—a real ghost—at Hurst?" she cried.

"It is said so."

"Oh, I should like to see it!" "I have no wish that way," he replied, with a sullen laugh.

"Whose is it? Do tell me!"

"Oh, a wicked ancestor," he rejoined, "who for crimes committed on earth is not permitted to rest in his grave."

"I wonder whether it is true? Whether the ghost ever has been seen?"

"You may have an opportunity of judging for yourself, Miss Everton. I hope when my sister comes down that you will honour Hurst with your presence. May I bring my sister to call on you, Miss Mortimer?" turning to that lady with a graceful supplication in his manner.

"We shall be delighted to see Lady Augusta!" returned Miss Sophie, in her best manner, though her heart, foolish and old perhaps, yet still permeated to the core, with the ambitious hopes of her youth for Eve, fluttered like a caged bird, and throbbled in her ample bosom as though ready to burst with joy at the prospect of receiving Lady Augusta Fitzroy as a visitor.

"I shall like to see Hurst very much!" said Eve, simply, not sharing in the least her aunt's ambitious hopes and fancies.

"I hope you will not be disappointed when you do see it!" observed Lord James, as he rose to take his leave.

That night at dinner the conversation turned wholly and solely on the topic of the Fitzroys.

They were discussed from the time the title was created in the reign of Henry the Seventh down to the present day, while



Lord James came in for a particularly large dose of remark and criticism from the ladies. Jack was very silent, it might almost be said grumpy, and after having granted an acknowledgment of having heard Miss Sophie's information respecting his lordship's visit he maintained an obstinate silence until dessert was placed on the table, and the servants had withdrawn, and then, in a sarcastic and disagreeable voice, he inquired,—

"Can't the subject be changed? Surely we have had enough and to spare about the Duke of Hampstead and his numerous family. I for one can dispense with any further information with regard to them."

"Jack, my dear!" exclaimed Pussy, solicitously. "I am afraid you are not quite well. You look so pale. Do take a glass of port!"

"No, thank you. I am only suffering from a plethora of Fitzroy."

"Or has Molly been unkind to-day?" inquired Eve, mischievously, a twinkle in her large eyes, as she fixed them on his angry ace.

"Molly be—" exclaimed the young man, savagely flinging down the stalk of the strawberry he had just demolished.

"Is her father inexorable? Won't he give his consent to your union and make you happy?" continued his tormentor.

"Confound it! Can't you leave the girl's name alone?" and, pushing back his chair violently, Jack stamped out of the room in high dudgeon.

"Poor boy!" laughed his cousin, for the hopeless love of Molly Dill, the bailiff's daughter, for her father's master was well-known, and was a source of amusement to Eve and annoyance to him. Only—he had never appeared so much annoyed before; and Eve wondered a little that night as she sat at the piano, running her hands idly over the keys and singing tiny snatches of song, why he had been so put out, and why he did not come and turn over the leaves for her as he usually did, and ask her to sing his favourite songs, and make much of her as was his wont.

Only no Jack appeared, and the evening appearing uncommonly long, she went to bed early and dreamt of strawberries and strawberry-leaved coronets, and dukes, and ghosts, and a variety of queer things.

Lord James did not let the grass grow under his feet. Next day an artistically-arranged basket of fruit was brought to Eastdene by a groom in the Hampstead livery for Miss Everton, and two days later a bouquet of roses, and then a huge salmon, with a few lines from his lordship, begging her acceptance of his leviathan of the deep, and saying it had been caught by his brother Clarence in one of the rivers of his father's Scotch estate.

Miss Everton serenely accepted these evidences of the young man's gratitude and admiration, though Jack was for sending them back or pitching them into the dust-bin; and the two old ladies rejoiced exceedingly to think that their pretty Eve had achieved such a conquest—for conquest they knew it to be when Lady Augusta Fitzroy, the eldest daughter of the Duke of Hampstead, drove up with her brother one afternoon to pay them a visit, and was cordial to the utmost extent of her power. Only she was such a frozen icicle of an aristocrat that she could not thaw to any great extent, or appear very natural.

She was more human to Jack, who did not at all appreciate her attentions, than she was to anyone else; and when she gave Eve an invitation to dinner for that day week she included Jack, slightly to her brother's annoyance, for he had supposed Jordan to be a much older man, and hardly regarded

his well-made and stalwart proportions with kindly eyes. He was good-looking enough to prove a rival, his lordship thought, and he did not want a rival. He preferred a clear field for himself.

"Why did you ask that fellow Jordan?" he began, pettishly, as soon as they were in the carriage again.

"Miss Everton could not come alone!" replied Lady Augusta, evasively, colouring a little.

"There are the Miss Mortimers!"

"The elder one told me she never went out at night."

"They might have made an exception in our favour. It is summer time. It would be different in the winter."

"The young man will be an acquisition."

"Oh, you think so?" laughed her brother.

"Yes. Decidedly!"

"They are a handsome family."

"Very. Miss Everton is lovely!"

"High praise from one young woman of another," said Lord James, gratefully.

"I am always just," she rejoined, with a touch of that intense and icy pride that she generally reserved for strangers and those lower in the social scale than herself.

"Do you think the Duke would approve?" he queried, with some hesitation.

"Possibly. She is not your equal, of course. Still, there is the aristocracy of beauty, and she is rarely beautiful!"

"I have never seen such a face!" he cried, passionately. "It haunts me. I shall not feel happy, not feel certain, until I have gained a promise from her lips, an assurance that I may hope."

"You have made up your mind, then? You mean to marry?" remarked Lady Augusta, turning her cold eyes on him with just a shade of surprise in their placid depths.

"Yes. If she will accept me," he rejoined, a trifle sullenly.

"And have you counted the cost of this proceeding?" she asked, after a perceptible pause.

"Yes, I have counted the cost," he repeated, still sullenly, and keeping his dark face turned away.

"You have thought of everything? Considered everything?"

"I have considered everything."

"Of course it was necessary for Drummond to marry. He is the eldest son-and-heir to the title. But is it wise for you?"

"Of course it is," he interrupted with a passionate burst of anger, that seemed to frighten her a little. "Why should I be shut out from every joy? Why should I be condemned to live a wretched, lonely, miserable life?—Why, I envy the labourers on my estate when I see them with their wives and children. They have something to live for. I have nothing. A dead blank seems to face me, and I will not bear it. I will be happy. She—she—need never know anything!"

"No, no. Certainly not," agreed his sister, quickly; "and since you have made up your mind, James, let me wish you every success in your wooing, and a speedy and happy termination to it."

"Thanks, dear!" he said, more quietly, as he kissed her.

#### CHAPTER V.

"THIS is the haunted chamber, Miss Everton!" cried Lord James, throwing wide the door of a great dark room, in one corner of which was a huge four-post bed, canopied and draped with purple brocade, and surmounted by nodding ostrich plumes, that gave it the appearance of a hearse. In another corner was a curious massive wardrobe, of the time of Elizabeth. In the window was a carved oak table, with a swing

mirrow; another stood by the bedside, and on it were a pair of quaint silver candlesticks.

There were several heavy chairs upholstered in purple brocade, and over the tall mantel-shelf was the portrait of a gallant, with peaked beard and ruff, and above the picture a pair of rapiers were crossed, and on either side a dagger, while an old gothic clock hung on the wall, conveniently placed for the occupant of the bed to see it.

"What do you think of it?"

"That it is rather a gruesome place!" she said, with a laugh that ended in a shudder. "The sort of place where a murder or some such horrible crime might have been committed!"

"Perhaps a murder has been perpetrated here!" said the master of Hurst, slowly, his dark eyes wandering round the room in a curious fashion. "Who knows?" with a queer laugh. "It often seems to me to be peopled with spirits!"

"Don't be ridiculous, James!" said Lady Augusta, sharply, who had followed them into the room with Jack. "It is a hideous old place, and the furniture and appointments atrocious. Only to suppose there is anything supernatural about it is worse than childish. It is absolutely wrong. Take my advice. Let Maple's men loose in it, with orders to entirely renovate and renew, and then see what a different aspect it will wear—how much cheerier and pleasanter!"

"I think I will take your advice," said her brother, slowly, his eyes fixed on a dark corner near the wardrobe, while Jack's eyes were fixed on him, an expression on, half angry, half pitying on his good-natured face.

"What do you say, Miss Everton?" turning to her.

"I quite agree with Lady Augusta. I think the room would be better modernised and brightened."

"Then it shall be done."

"I shall look forward to seeing it under its newer and prettier aspect," she said, cheerfully, taking her cue from Lady Augusta, and refraining from indulging her rather morbid fancy for occult things and gruesome old places.

She was beginning to get accustomed to something just a little bit curious about her titled admirer, and to the fact of his sister often turning the conversation when it took a dismal or creepy character, to his abstraction and wandering looks.

She had seen a good deal of him during the past two months, and of his big Tudor house, only she had never seen the haunted room before.

Lady Augusta managed that, though this day Lord James had escaped her surveillance, and led Eve in triumph to this Bluebeard chamber that he seemed so proud of, though it was equally clear her ladyship did not share his pride.

Eve was not sorry when the others appeared. She feared a proposal from his lordship, and was not quite prepared with her answer, did not quite know whether she would say "yea" or "nay!"—lift him to the highest pinnacle of joy, or dash him down to the lowest depths of misery.

Now, the girl was not a coquette, and did not wish to play on the young man's feelings, but she had been forced into her present unpleasant and somewhat false position by circumstances, and the conduct of those around her.

In the first place Lord James haunted her like a shadow. In the second place, Miss Sophie and Miss Mary talked unceasingly of her grand prospects and what she ought to do when she became Lady James Fitzroy, and the grand gowns she would require in

her trousseau, the marvellous bonnets, and the superb confections; while Lady Augusta was most friendly and cordial with her—quite sisterly, in fact—and told her about many family affairs; constantly pressed her to come to the Hurst, and acted in every way as though she wished to throw the young people into each other's society; while last, though by no means least, Jack was distant and cool with her, hardly ever spoke to her, never asked her to ride or walk with him, and was out nearly all day by himself.

Thus was she forced, in a measure, into the position of appearing to accept Lord James as her lover; and, sometimes, such a curious feeling, a blending of utter weariness and indifference, and keen stinging annoyance, made her reckless and careless of ultimate consequences. So she accepted the Fitzroy's invitations, and went often to Hurst—sometimes alone, sometimes with one or both of her aunts, and occasionally—very occasionally—with Jack, who hated putting his foot across Lord James's threshold; only Lady Augusta admired young Jordan, and when she could run him to ground would take no refusal from him, organising on the spot a dinner, a luncheon, a picnic, a tennis party, and making Jack consent to come to it, which he had to do, inwardly swearing at her pertinacity and infatuation for him.

"Shall we go and look at the pictures?" suggested Lady Augusta, evidently anxious to get her brother away from the ghost room.

"Yes," agreed Eve at once. "I want to hear all about them."

"Then I will tell you all I know about my ancestors," said Lord James, quickly leading the way to the picture-gallery, where he ensconced her in one of the window-seats, and, fetching a cushion, seated himself at her feet.

The afternoon sun streamed in redly through the great windows, and fell on his dark, upturned face, and passionate, eloquent eyes.

He looked so handsome, so much like the typical lover of romance, that Eve's blue orbs softened a little as they rested on him, and grew less wearied and indifferent.

"I think we are in the way here!" whispered Lady Augusta in Jack's ear, with an affected laugh. "It is a clear case of two being company, more none, Mr. Jordan!"

"I don't understand," he replied stiffly, with a well-bred stare, haughty as anything, she could have done herself.

"Oh, don't you know? Don't you understand?" she said hastily, in a low tone. "that we hope to welcome your cousin shortly as a member of our family?"

"Will this arrangement be agreeable to his Grace?" inquired Jack, coldly.

"Certainly! More than agreeable. My father is quite ready to receive Miss Everton as a daughter!"

"I am glad to hear that, as I, for one, would never give my consent to my cousin marrying into a family where she was not welcome, or where she would not welcome, or where she would be looked down upon as an inferior. There can be nothing more miserable for a young girl than such a fate."

"You need have no fears on that score!" Lady Augusta hastened to assure him. "Eve will be most warmly welcomed," and she might have added, "you also," only womanly modesty forbade it. "We are anxious that my brother should please himself. He does not want high rank or wealth. We have no desire to cross his wishes."

"It might not be wise to do so," said Jack, significantly.

"No, no—quite so," stammered her ladyship, flushing up to the roots of her dark hair. "We wish him to be happy."

"Do you think he ought to marry?" demanded the young man pointedly, looking his companion full in the eyes.

"I think he ought," returned Lady Augusta boldly. "I think it is his best, nay, his only chance of happiness. It will be the saving of him!"

"And the ruin of poor Eve's happiness!" muttered Jack, angrily, as he followed her ladyship into the garden.

"Now, which picture shall I tell you about first?" asked Lord James, as Jack and Augusta left the gallery, looking up adoringly into the beautiful, blooming face above him, that did not look quite so smiling and bright as usual.

"Oh, any one you wish!" she returned, a little indifferently.

"No, you must choose," he urged. "How can I tell which of all this motley crew, casting a look round at his ancestors, representing various periods from the time of the Restoration to his present Gracious Majesty's reign, would interest you? If I choose a courtly scholar of Queen Anne's time, you will say, No, I want to hear about that wit who adorned George the Fourth's Court, and so on."

"I should not be so difficult," she rejoined, with a laugh. "But since I must choose the subject, let it be the history of that gallant with the flowing curls, lace collar, and plumed hat."

"Ah, that was Lord Lancelot Fitzroy, a favourite of Charles the Second. Lancelot fought nobly against Cromwell's Ironsides, and when Charles came to the throne of his fathers the King did not forget his faithful services. He loaded him with substantial favours, gave him the Abbey of Trent, where my brother Desmond now lives, made him Baron of Bolsivo, gave him a pension, and sought him a bride amongst the fairest in the land, giving him this thing," pointing to a large old-fashioned diamond that he wore on his little finger, "wherewith to pledge his troth."

"What a lovely old ring!" exclaimed Eve, examining it closely.

"Yes. It is quaint and curious, but it did not bring him luck in his love-affairs. Poor Lancelot did not prosper in his wooing."

"How was that?"

"The lady, like a good many others of her sex, was capricious and hard to please, and it is said because she was ordered to love Lord Lancelot, Baron Bolsivo, that she flatly and plainly refused to do so; and as he was madly in love when she married a more favoured and successful rival, he wedged his sword firmly into the ground, and, throwing himself on it, let the weapon pierce the heart she had already irreparably wounded, and so died."

"What a tragic and sorrowful story!" exclaimed the listener, a little thrill of horror running through her from head to foot.

"Yes, it is gloomy."

"Eve," he added, suddenly, looking up into her face, passionate love and longing in his sombre eyes, "Eve, tell me, shall I be happy in my wooing, or like my unfortunate ancestor?"

"Really—Lord James—I—I don't know," she stammered, started out of her usual calm and self-possession by the suddenness of his question.

"And if you don't know," he said, very gently, taking her hand, "who in the whole world is to tell me? Eve," he went on, and she remained silent, "do you not know that I love you?"

"I have not been conceited enough to think so up to the present, my lord," she replied, evasively.

"Have I not shown it in a thousand ways?" he queried, with gentle insistence. "Has it not struck you that I cared for you very much?"

"I—I—thought—it—was only—friendship," she told him, blushing painfully.

"Have I concealed my real feelings so well?" he exclaimed, in surprise. "Have I never given you cause to suspect that I wished a closer tie than that of mere friendship to exist between us?"

"It was hardly likely that I should suppose you wished for anything more than friendship considering the difference in our relative positions, Lord James," she said, taking refuge in that woman's ready excuse, "difference in position." "You belong to the aristocracy, are closely allied to one of the noblest families in the land. My people, those with whom I now live, are simple country gentlefolk; and my father," she added, with intense pride, and a deep flush that spread over her white neck, and up to the roots of her yellow hair, "was a clerk in the bank!"

"What of that?" cried her lover quickly. "Does it make you any the less dear to me? Do you think I care for any trifle of that kind? It could make no difference to our happiness if we love each other!"

"That is what the poets sing and novelists write!" she told him brightly. "I am inclined to think that in real life it would make a vast difference."

"What a wise little woman it is!" said his lordship, jestingly, patting the hand he still held tenderly. "It would never make the slightest difference to me. I could not care for you more if you were a king's daughter. I promise you, Eve, that if you will become my wife I will never give you cause to regret it. You shall be most fondly adored and cared for; and, as far as it lies in my power, your path through the world shall be one of roses. Not a cloud shall shadow your life if I can prevent it."

"You are—very good. You—do me—a great—honour," she faltered, feeling curiously distressed now that the proposal had actually taken place, and very unwilling to pledge away her liberty.

"The honour is with me, if you will accept me. Come, let this be the pledge of our mutual love," and he attempted to put the old diamond ring on her slender finger.

But she drew her hand back with an unmistakable gesture of refusal.

"Lord James," she began, slowly and heavily. "I cannot accept your ring and plight you my troth."

"Why not?" he asked, eagerly, his eyes devouring her fair face.

"Because—I am not sure of myself."

"Not sure of yourself! My dearest, explain yourself?" he implored.

"I am not sure that I love you," she said, in low tones.

"Ah!"

The young man dropped her hand, and a curious greyish pallor spread over his face, while a look of unutterable anguish crept into his dark eyes.

"You are not sure?" he said, after a minute's pause. "Will you take time and think? I will wait so gladly any length of time, if only there is a faint hope for me in the end."

"Yes. Give me a week," she said, with a sigh. "At the end of that time I will give you my answer."

"So be it," he agreed, gladly, his handsome face once more alight with love and hope. "In a week's time I will come to Eastdene for my answer! and, oh! my darling, let it be a merciful one. You don't know how much I love you! You don't know what you are to me, more than life itself!" and kissing her hands with respectful tenderness, he led her out to the garden to join the others.

"Did that fellow propose to-day in the picture-gallery?" asked Jack, as they drove homeward that evening.



"Yes," returned Eve, shortly, nettled by her cousin's manner, and feeling a strange desire to quarrel with him and snub him.

"Have you accepted him?" growled the young man.

"Really, Jack, though you do take a most flattering and delicate interest in my affairs, I must really decline to answer your question, which I consider an impertinent one."

"As you please," he retorted, sullenly.

"Lord James would never have asked me such a question about you. He is far too well-bred to commit such a solecism."

"Oh, curse him!" broke out Jack, furiously lashing his mettlesome grey in his anger, and for the rest of the drive there was silence between the cousins—a silence significant and ominous.

#### CHAPTER VI.

THERE was quite a commotion amongst the old ladies at Eastdene when they heard the news, and it could not very well be kept from them, seeing that every time they encountered Eve, after she had been in Lord James's society, they invariably inquired,—

"Has he proposed?"

They fussed and fidgeted about her, and seemed as though they could not make half enough of the future Lady James Fitzroy.

Only Miss Mary sighed every now and then, and looked at Jack's black face inquiringly, with a puzzled expression on her plain countenance.

"Of course, you must wear white satin," observed Miss Sophie, the next morning as she poured out the coffee. "Nothing becomes a bride so well, and a Limerick lace veil, and the family diamonds. Of course, Jack will lend you the diamonds for the occasion. Won't you, Jack?"

"Umph!" ungraciously responded that individual from behind a newspaper, when thus directly appealed to.

"And you must have, at least, six bridesmaids!—three in pink, and three in blue. Don't you think so, Mary?"

"Ye-es," hesitatingly agreed Miss Mary, as though she was not quite certain about anything.

"I shall be proud of you when you are a duke's daughter, Eve!" exclaimed Miss Sophie, in an irrepressible burst of pride.

"But, my dear aunt," expostulated Eve, as Jack got up in a disgusted fashion, and left the room. "I may never be a duke's daughter—never hold that proud position!"

"Oh, yes, you will. There is nothing to prevent you now!" retorted her elderly relative, with firm conviction.

"You forget that I have not yet accepted Lord James!"

"Of course you will do so?"

"I don't know!" she replied, coolly.

"Sometimes I think that I won't!"

"Eve!" said Miss Mortimer, solemnly, "if you refuse him I shall never forgive you! No never! I could not!"

"I should be very sorry to incur your displeasure, aunt; but at the same time I must claim my right to dispose of my life as may seem best to me—to follow my own inclinations!"

"They will probably take you to Lord James's arms!" said the old lady, with extremeunction.

"They may!" returned the young one, drily, as he sauntered out of the room to put an end to the discussion.

She had had about enough of weddings, orange blossoms, white satin and bridesmaids. She felt sick to death of it all, and as a wild bird newly-caged might. She wanted rest and quiet, and she sought it in the library—a room generally empty at that

time of the morning. She was half-way across it when she discovered that it was already occupied.

Sitting in an arm chair with his face buried in his hands was Jack, his whole attitude and aspect betokening the greatest dejection.

"Why Jack, what is the matter?" said Eve, anxiously, crossing over and standing by his side.

"Nothing!" replied Jack, promptly and crossly, dropping his hands from before his face, and sitting very stiff and upright.

"I don't believe that!" his cousin told him. "You are as white as a sheet! Are you in trouble?"

"If I am it doesn't concern you," he said, fiercely.

"Yes, it does," she replied, laying one hand gently on his shoulders. "Let me help you. Can I?"

He sat silently for two or three minutes; then lifting his head he looked straightly and steadily into her eyes.

"You might help me," he said, slowly.

"Then let me."

"Only if I speak I shall offend you."

"No! Say what you like. I promise not to be offended!"

"It is about your marriage!"

"Ah!"

Her face became cold and rigid at once.

"I am afraid you are taking a leap in the dark," he said, braving himself for the fray.

"Not at all!" she responded, coolly.

"My eyes are quite wide open."

"You do not know much about your future husband?"

"All there is to know," she told him with superb confidence.

"I hardly think so."

"I am certain!"

"You are mistaken! There is one thing concerning the Fitzroys that you do not know, and that I think you ought to know!"

"What untruth are you going to tell me?" she asked, scornfully. "Are you jealous of my good fortune?"

"By Heaven, that is it!" he cried, passionately, springing to his feet, and confronting her. "I am jealous of you! Not because of your good fortune, as you call it; but because I love you!"

"Ah, Eve, how I love you!" he went on, hurriedly, while his words thrilled her through from head to foot with a new exquisite sensation. "You have always been dear to me; but for the last three years you have been all the world to me, and it is this love that impels me to speak. People will say that I am a cowardly, dishonourable fellow to speak against your lover! Still, my love for you is stronger than any sense of honour! I cannot, dare not let you go to a dreadful fate from which any woman might shrink unwarmed. Forewarned you may save yourself if you will. Were you my daughter I would absolutely forbid the marriage; even if I could claim a brother's right I might prevent it. As it is, I can only plead to you to save yourself!"

"What is the mystery?" the girl asked, coldly and steadily, though her pulses were leaping madly.

"There is madness in the Hampstead family. Lord James has already been an inmate of a lunatic asylum!"

She shuddered visibly at this.

"The story of the haunted room is this. His uncle, Lord Edmund Fitzroy, cruelly ill-treated an unfortunate girl, the daughter of one of his tenants on the Hurst estate. He then decoyed her into that room and murdered her, taking his own life immediately after. In every generation one or more of the family go mad, and generally take their own or a fellow-creature's life. Lord James is the only one of the present generation who has shown signs of insanity."

"You refused him?" said Jack, later on in the day, when they were alone together in the library, looking at her, inquiry in his eyes.

"I leave you to decide whether your life as his wife will be a pleasant one. I should say not. The fear of this terrible malady breaking out will haunt you through every sleeping and waking hour, making life a misery. If you have children, which, heaven forbid, you will dread to see signs of incipient mania in their little faces. You will never know what it is to have a peaceful moment, a happy hour. This dark horror will cloud your brightest days, dim your purest hopes."

"Forgive me for speaking," he went on, displaying the deepest emotion. "Believe me, I am not actuated by selfish motives. It is my great love for you that prompts me to try and save you—a love that is as great as it is hopeless. I know I am nothing to you. But if I can save you—that will be enough. It has been a bitter trial to hear your marriage with another discussed as an everyday, ordinary matter, and I have tried to be silent, only I could not let you be sacrificed. Think what you will of me, dear Eve, only save yourself," and turning away abruptly he left the room, while his cousin sank down on the chair he had vacated, and stared vacantly at nothing.

"No. My inclinations will not lead me to his lordship's arms," she said aloud at last, and then she, too, got up and left the room.

The week of probation was up, and Lord James was to have his answer from Eve—his "yes" or his "nay."

There was a dinner party at Eastdene, and he and his sister were amongst the guests—he looking flushed and radiant with expected happiness, though anyone behind the scenes might have felt uneasy at the restless glitter in his large, dark eyes.

The dinner went off very well. Jack looked handsome and manly enough, though very pale, as he sat at the foot of the table and resolutely avoided meeting his cousin's eye; while Eve, in a very pale, shimmering blue gown, had never looked more lovely, or more likely to drive men to distraction.

Lord James soon joined the ladies in the drawing-room after dinner, and singling out Eve, begged her to take a stroll in the conservatory with him—a proposal to which she agreed, knowing that she could not escape the inevitable.

She was not there very long, when she returned, looking rather white and disturbed, and whispered something to Lady Augusta, who at once left the room with her. An awkward pause ensued, and the guests, divining something was wrong, soon began to make their adieux and depart.

The next day it was all over the countryside that Lord James Fitzroy had gone suddenly mad, and had tried to drown himself in the river Done, from which he was rescued by his valet and groom; and rumour went on to say that he had been removed to the private madhouse from which he had only been liberated a couple of years before, and where it was likely he would pass the remainder of his life, as it did not seem safe that he should be at large.

Miss Sophie and Miss Mary turned their eyes up to Heaven, and devoutly thanked their Maker that he had saved Eve from the terrible fate of becoming his wife, and they pressed her rather closely as to his behaviour while in the conservatory.

But she parried their queries cleverly, simply saying that he suddenly seemed to lose all self-control, threatened to murder her, and then dashed away through the door leading to the garden, which stood open.

"You refused him?" said Jack, later on in the day, when they were alone together in the library, looking at her, inquiry in his eyes.

"Yes; I refused him," said Eve, "and it seemed to make him mad and wild in a minute. I was terrified and so sorry for him, poor fellow!"

"Ah, indeed, poor fellow! Still you did right to refuse him, my dear. Your life with him would have been intolerable."

"Yes. Intolerable!"

"You will not have long to wait for another lover, Eve," he went on, sadly.

"They will come in battalions."

"I don't want battalions!" she told him, pettishly. "I don't want any lovers at all."

"Don't you?"

"No. They are a bother!"

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, I do, and Jack?"

"Yes, dear!"

"How stupid you are this morning!"

"Am I, dear?" very humbly indeed.

"Yes. You are absolutely dense!"

"I don't mean to be."

"Then you are what you don't mean to be."

"I can't quite help that. Can I?"

"You can if you like. You don't like. That is just it!"

"You are severe this morning."

"It is because you are so stupid!"

"How shall I try to be brighter?"

"Ask me some questions."

"What am I to ask?"

"You haven't asked me why I refused Lord James!" and she began to twist a button on his coat backwards and forwards.

"Because I supposed that I knew why."

"You don't!"

"Was it not because of the insanity in the family?"

"Certainly not. I should have banced that if I had really—loved—him."

"Why was it then?"

"Oh, Jack, what an old goose you are!"

"Why, Eve?" looking down at the beautiful blushing face near his breast, for both little hands were occupied now in trying to wrench the unoffending buttons off his coat.

"What did you say to me the other day?"

"I said a good many things."

"You said you were nothing to me!" she murmured, in low tones.

"Eve, am I?" he cried, catching some thing of her meaning.

"Everything!" she whispered.

"My darling!" drawing her arms round his throat and kissing her tenderly.

"I am not dreaming, am I?" he said, half-an-hour later, looking into the sky-blue eyes, that had lost some of their wicked merriment.

"No. You are wide-awake. Shall I pinch you to let you see?"

"If you like!"

"Then you are really going to be my wife?"

"Yes. Unless you would rather I became somebody else's."

"Thank you, no. I will keep you for myself!"

"How will you ever summon courage to tell Aunt Sophie?" she inquired, with an air of mock terror.

"Why?"

"She will be disappointed. You have no title. She expected me to marry a baronet at least, not a plain mister. There is no dignity about that!"

"I have no title, dearest; and I cannot give you a ducal coronet. But I can give you what is better than either."

"And what is that?" she asked, looking up at him, fondly.

"A crown of love!" he answered, as he stooped his lips to her.

[THE END.]

## UNSEEN FIRES.

BY EFFIE ADELAIDE ROWLANDS.

### SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Valentine Eyre is riding through a forest in Spain when his attention is arrested by the sight of the beautiful gipsy girl Zitella. Valentine ascertains that she is betrothed to Hermann, a member of the gipsy band, and he would spare her if possible from a loveless marriage. Zitella disguised as a peasant boy brings Valentine news of Hermann's intention to kill him, and as Zitella's action has made it impossible for her to return to her old life, Valentine undertakes to adopt her, and she is sent to England to be educated. Valentine's wife is reported dead, but in reality she still lives. Zitella's education being completed she determines to use the influence of Valentine's position and power to further her own ambitious ends. She promises to marry Valentine, and at the same time becomes involved in a love affair with Churchill Penrose. Valentine is summoned to his father's death bed, and then learns that he has no right to any name but his mother's, and the estates being entailed go to his brother Hermann.

### CHAPTER VIII.—Continued.

**Q**UEN his way downstairs he came into contact with Martin.

The servant glanced wistfully into the young man's face; but finding it stern and pale as marble he repressed a sigh, and passed on to his master's room, leaving Valentine to find his way out into the open air.

There was a terrible weight of shame and sorrow on the young man's heart. He had thought himself done with suffering—that with Zitella's love the happiness of his life had begun; but what were the disappointments, the pangs of the past, compared to the disgrace which had come upon him?

In that hour he did not dare to think of Zitella.

The story of his birth when revealed he would have thought could make no difference in the state of her feelings towards him; but he was a man of honour, and if he could have dared to think of Zitella he would have told himself that she must be set free.

He did not, however, think of Zitella; but his heart turned just then towards his dead wife's children, and he told himself that this infamy had come upon him as a just retribution for his neglect of those who ought to have been his first care. He felt deeply thankful that his children had never been known by any other name than that of De Nunaz for this would in a measure shield them from the consequences of his father's sin; but still it was very bitter to think that some day the finger of scorn might be pointed at his son or daughter.

His heart yearned tenderly towards the wife whom he believed to be lying in her grave, and he was glad that she was lying there, for this would have been a bitter blow to her proud, sensitive spirit; but it struck him with startling force that Celia had now, wherever she might be, a deeper cause of sorrow, seeing how her children were neglected by their father. A sharp pang of remorse seized him, and he resolved that on the following day he would pay a visit to Lockesley Hall, in Southshire.

"My master wishes most earnestly to see you, sir."

Roused from his unhappy reflections, Valentine paused in his walk, and, turning, met the troubled eyes of Martin gazing into his face.

"I think he's very near the end, Mr. Valentine," whispered the servant, in tremulous tones.

"The end of what?" was the young man's bitter retort. "Go back, and ask him that."

Valentine having spoken was turning sharply away when Martin laid a restraining hand on his arm.

"Oh! Mr. Valentine," he began, piteously, "I take a liberty; but my friendship for you is as old as your life, and whatever his faults have been you won't let him die alone at the last!"

Valentine shook off the man's arm with this vehement demand,—

"Why shouldn't he die alone? It's a small punishment for his crime. You do wrong, Martin, when you tempt me to cross yonder threshold again."

But still the young man did not move, and, having stood silent and irresolute for a few moments, Martin said slowly,—

"Mr. Valentine, my master's not been a good man, but he'll be likely to die better with you than without you."

Valentine turned round and glanced into the servant's face, then said slowly,—

"You may be right, Martin, or you may not; but, at all events, we will go now."

And no more was said, as the two retraced their steps to the house.

Valentine Eyre returned to the sick room just as the physician was leaving it. Doctor Porter recognised the young man, and out in the corridor told him that Vyvian Eyre's hours were now numbered. They conversed in whispers for a few minutes, then shook hands and parted, the doctor to go down to his waiting carriage, Valentine to enter his father's room.

He found that during his absence a visible change had taken place in the patient. Vyvian Eyre knew that he was dying, but he had the strength to be malicious. As he had lived so he would die—false, mean and cruel. He chuckled as he saw the misery which his hand had wrought reflected in his son's white-set face; but while he rejoiced in it he cringed to Valentine, asking him to remain by his side to the last.

"It won't be very long," he muttered, feebly, gloating like a miser over the hours which were still left to him to exult in the falsehoods which he had woven for his sons' destruction.

"Long or short, I will remain with you to the last."

This was Valentine's sole reply to his father's appeal. He knew why his presence was desired; but as he spoke he touched the bell, and Martin appeared, in prompt obedience to the summons.

"You can go to bed," whispered Valentine to the servant. "I will keep watch to-night."

Martin, though he loved his master, felt unbounded gratitude for the permission. He was worn out from want of sleep, for Vyvian Eyre was as exacting as he was ungrateful.

"Heaven bless you, Mr. Valentine!" whispered Martin. "I will lie down in the adjoining room, and if you want anything you can call me."

He then bade the man good-night, and, seating himself in the shadow of the bed curtains, prepared for a long vigil. Martin had given him the most minute instructions about the quantity of medicine to be given, and he was careful to pour it out at the proper hours. Each time Vyvian Eyre drained the glass he showed the innate cruelty of his nature by remarking, maliciously,—

"I hope you have not poisoned me, Val! The time is so short it would scarcely be worth your while."

Once he said, with a most vindictive chuckle,—

"I should advise you to go and live on your father-in-law in Castile. It was well old De Nunaz did not know that you had no right to your father's name; but after all you have lost little besides."

He was stopped by a violent spasm of pain, and Valentine dropped his head on his hands, too stricken for words; and thus he



remained until the prolonged silence came to him suddenly as being strange. He put out his hand, and, drawing aside the curtain, looked on his father's face. Even in the dim light of the night light he could see that a ghastly and terrible change had taken place. The next moment a pitiful cry of distress and pain rang through the room. It broke from the breast of the faithful Martin, who had suddenly started from his sleep in the next room. His fears were all confirmed as he looked over Valentine's shoulders at the pallid, evil face on the bed. He took his master's hand one moment in his, then dropped it heavily. It was the hand of the dead; then, turning on the living face grey as ashes, he wailed bitterly,—

"Oh, Heaven, my master! I have lost my master!"

That was the deepest, the sincerest lament that was made for Vyvian Eyre. Many followed the dead man to his last resting-place, but none mourned him. And of all Valentine had least cause to regret that the tomb should have closed over a base and worthless life.

When all was over Valentine explained his position to Martin, and then turned his back on Chavenage Court for ever. He would first go to London, offer Zitella her freedom, and then set forth to seek his brother Hermann. Honour he felt required all this of him, though Martin urged him frantically to treat the whole story as the delusion of a dying man's brain. He refused to be separated from Valentine, and was ready for his sake to endure permanent exile from England, for Valentine was resolved to spend the rest of his life in far-off lands. He had completely abandoned the idea of going to see his children. "What profit," he asked himself, bitterly, could they reap from a dishonoured father?"

Accompanied by Martin he went straight from Chavenage Court to London.

"Is Miss—are the ladies—no, I mean Lady Fitzroy. Is Lady Fitzroy at home?"

The butler at Lady Fitzroy's house in Belgrave-square was every whit as confused as his visitor.

"Miss Szarvas is not here, sir. At least, I mean—but Lady Fitzroy expects you. That is to say, I think she will be glad you've come so quickly."

Then Valentine, looking pale and haggard, was ushered into the presence of Lady Fitzroy, who half rose to meet him, then sank back in her chair in the most violent agitation.

"Oh, Mr. Eyre," she exclaimed, between hysterical sobs, "how terrible such things are! How shall we discuss the matter?"

Valentine was surprised at this display of emotion.

"You allude to the death of my father."

So the young man began; then paused, struck by a terrible thought. Could his father's malice have prompted him to anticipate him with Lady Fitzroy? He drew nearer, and, laying his hand on his companion's arm, said, in agitated tones,—

"My father told you all before his death."

Lady Fitzroy's nerves were evidently very much unstrung, for she received these words with a little trembling cry.

"Then your father is dead? I did not know it—and you left him to come here?"

Valentine hastily detailed the manner of his father's death.

"Then you did not receive my telegram?" asked the lady, pityingly.

"No. What was your telegram about?" queried Valentine, in startled tones.

The ominous silence which followed was a preparation for evil tidings; but Valentine did not dream of what was to come.

"Oh! Mr. Eyre," gasped Lady Fitzroy, "I cannot believe that a girl could have been so wicked, so heartless! The night you left she refused to go out, and when we returned we found her gone. She had taken all her jewels and handsome dresses, so we knew it was a deep laid plan. But that is not all, for this morning I discovered during my absence my room had been invaded, and a quantity of gold taken from the secret drawers of my desk. There was only one person who knew the gold was there."

"Who was that?" asked Valentine, sharply. "Of whom are you speaking?"

Lady Fitzroy did not reply, and in his terror the young man's hand tightened on her arm until she cried with pain—a cry that Valentine did not heed.

"For Heaven's sake, speak," he cried, hoarsely. "Say who has fled!"

"Zitella Szarvas! Your ward, who would have been your wife."

Valentine dropped Lady Fitzroy's arm suddenly.

"I beg your pardon," he said, with a strange smile. "I have been rude—hurt you. You must excuse me. Zitella Szarvas—" he paused, and his calmness forsook him, shattered in this cry,—

"Good Heaven!—Zitella! What a blind fool I have been!"

The next instant a peal of bitter, scornful laughter rang through the room.

#### CHAPTER IX.

ZITELLA'S flight became very soon the one all-absorbing theme of fashionable London. The most wild and romantic stories were in circulation; but Valentine Eyre was not there to hear them.

Spurred by thoughts of revenge, the betrayed lover had lost no time in leaving England.

Accompanied by Martin, and urged in that direction by some hints Blanche Hastings had dropped, he had set out for Spain, making a vow that he would never rest until he had discovered Zitella, and punished her cruel treachery.

Lady Fitzroy was anxious to have the whole matter hushed up. She dreaded the ridicule which might fall upon her when it should transpire that she had been tricked and robbed by an adventuress; but Miss Hastings was remorseless in her desire to have the fugitive caught and punished, and daily and hourly she urged her hostess to put the affair into the hands of the police.

Zitella had robbed her of some very valuable jewels, a loss which she expressed herself unable to bear with resignation.

She talked about the worth of her emeralds until Lady Fitzroy felt it was her duty to try and recover the stolen gems.

Accordingly detectives were employed, and soon it was proved beyond doubt that Zitella was a low-born adventuress, and the story of her noble lineage a trumped-up tale.

The detectives in their search came upon one who had been a silent witness of Zitella's interview with the vagrant who, for a handsome sum of money, agreed to repeat a tissue of lies to Valentine Eyre.

The gipsy woman, however, was nowhere to be found, and it was rightly supposed that she and the son of whom she had spoken had returned to their native land.

The new maid, a young Spanish woman, who was engaged to wait on Zitella, was nowhere to be found. She had disappeared on the same night as her mistress, and so all inferred that the two had fled together; for without an accomplice it seemed impossible that Zitella could have carried out her daring scheme.

The surprise was great when, after a few weeks, Inez Valdez, the maid, appeared, and

denied all knowledge of her mistress's movements.

Inez Valdez told her story readily. She was the daughter-in-law of a rich but miserly old man, who lived at this moment in Spain.

Piedro Valdez had driven her and his son away to gain their living how they would.

The young pair had come to England, and here Inez's husband had got into trouble, which ended in the loss of his reason. He had been placed in an asylum, whither Inez had been hastily summoned by telegram on the very night of her mistress's flight, and while the rest of the household were away at Lady Dene's dance.

On arriving at the asylum Inez had found her unfortunate husband very ill, and so she had remained in the neighbourhood until death ended his sufferings.

When questioned on the subject, Inez frankly confessed that she had confided her sad story to her young mistress, who had given her a generous sum of money, and urged her not to hurry back.

The detectives, who heard this story, put themselves into immediate communication with the asylum, and found that all Inez's statements were perfectly true; but every effort to discover Zitella ended in failure.

Not a trace of the fugitive could be found. The detectives, clever as they were, were baffled at every turn; and at length Lady Fitzroy grew impatient, and determined to spend no more money on the vain quest.

She told Blanche that she would make good the emeralds, whose loss seemed to have afflicted her so deeply; and at the same time she emphatically declared that she would never forgive Valentine Eyre for having palmed off a low-born adventuress on her.

"He alone," she said, "was to blame from beginning to end."

But Lady Fitzroy only said these things in Blanche's ear, for the true story of her discomfiture was never fully known, and, as far as was possible, she guarded the secret of Zitella's real origin.

The girl's beauty had made a vivid impression on society, and her flight was always regarded as more or less of a romance.

London had not done talking of the lovely Miss Szarvas when there arrived a well-authenticated report of Valentine Eyre's death. Rumour said that he had been killed in a railway accident, and, considering his recent misfortunes, it was generally felt that death must have come to him as a welcome release.

The news travelled to Lady Fitzroy's house in Belgrave Square. The shock which it created there may be more easily imagined than described.

Then there followed another surprise, perhaps the greatest and most incredible of all, for fashionable London.

The beautiful Blanche Hastings had quitted society for ever, and resigned herself and her fortune to the hands of a religious sisterhood, to whom she bound herself by irrevocable vows.

The day of the Duchess's garden party had arrived, and most of the guests were assembled on the lawn of the Duke's magnificent seat, which presented an unusually gay and festive appearance.

The band of the Southshire Militia formed a pleasant distraction for the players who occupied the various courts, which were the Duchess's pride and the admiration of the whole county. Every extravagant simplicity that art could devise was displayed in the costumes of the players, and all the bright colours blended together produced an effect as charming as it was indescribable.

At the entrance of the principal marquess



"I WILL INTRODUCE YOU TO MY FATHER-IN-LAW," SAID INEZ, AS THE UNPLEASANT LOOKING OLD MAN APPROACHED THEM.  
(Illustrating the splendid romance UNSEEN FIRES.)

stood the handsome, stately Duchess of Stanislaugh, and by the side of her Grace stood Ethel Drood, looking her loveliest in a gown of cream-coloured Indian silk, which had been purchased as an invaluable aid in the captivity of the Marquis of Eastshire, and was not yet paid for; but for all that Ethel did not wear it with less serenity. She listened to the flattering whispers of an attendant courtier, and answered now and then with her pretty nothings and her mechanical smile, while all the time her eye was on the alert to catch the first glimpse of the Lockesly Hall party, who had not yet arrived.

"I think, my dear Ethel, that there will be no more arrivals!" said the Duchess, at last.

"It certainly seems as if the whole world was already here!" replied the other, in a languid tone, as she ran her fine eyes over the groups, and gracefully waved a palm-leaf fan.

But at that moment the roll of wheels was heard, and the Lockesly Hall carriage appeared in the drive.

"How unkind of you to be so late!" whispered Ethel to Churchill; while the Duchess greeted her old friend, Mrs. Penance, with effusion.

Almost before he knew what he was doing Churchill found himself by the side of Ethel, walking away towards some shrubberies in an opposite direction to the rest of the party, and listening in a somewhat dazed manner to his companion's passionate protests and explanations.

"You do not believe me," murmured Ethel, as they turned into a thick alley of roses, "when I say that my rejection of you was the outcome of mistaken pride and folly, which I now bitterly regret! I had heard

some discreditable tales of you which I know now, too well, were absolutely false; but, unfortunately, you came when I was smarting under the first pangs of disappointment in you. Ah! you sneer. It is too cruel. I have humiliated myself to you, and you will not believe me."

"Had we not better return to the lawn, Miss Drood?"

Ethel became livid with anger as her companion's cold, sneering tones fell on her ear; but she still went on more passionately.

"Will you believe me if I say that for your sake I have broken off my engagement with the Marquis of Eastshire?"

"I did not know that you and my cousin Eastshire were engaged," was Churchill's scathing reply.

"The Marquis proposed to me by letter," went on Ethel, in choking tones. "Unfortunately, that and all his subsequent ones are in my desk at home; but I can show you a copy of the letter which I have written this very day, saying that my engagement with him cannot be fulfilled."

Churchill smiled contemptuously, and then, though he felt ashamed of his brutality, he replied,—

"Pray spare yourself, my dear Miss Drood. And as for Eastshire, I am sorry he should have been so badly treated on my account, especially as he was not to blame for what, after all, is to me a matter for congratulation."

"You insult. You! a man, and in cold blood!" gasped Ethel, in a voice that would not rise above a whisper.

"You force it on me," replied Churchill, in pained tones. He could not be man and remain unmoved at the sight of this girl's humiliation. "If I have hurt you," he con-

tinued, "I am very sorry; but had I not better take you back to the lawn?"

"Yes; take me back," replied Ethel, and she smiled as she spoke—a ghastly smile, that made Churchill feel very brutal.

He almost relented towards Ethel in that moment; but the remembrance of her former heartlessness hardened him anew, and no word was spoken until they reached the lawn.

When Miss Drood and her escort reappeared the Duchess was standing among a group of her most distinguished guests; but

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LADY FORTESCUE'S MEDITATIONS WERE INTERRUPTED BY HER MAID BRINGING HER A LETTER.  
(Illustrating the brilliant story IVY'S PERIL.)

when Ethel approached she stepped apart, and, bending her ear, listened to a few whispered words with an expression which assured all present that something very unpleasant was about to happen.

As Ethel ceased speaking the Duchess drew herself up to a stately height, and motioned towards her one of the attendant squires.

"Mr. Clissold," said her Grace, slowly, "I think there are servants in that tent," indicating one with a wave of her snowy hand. "Will you kindly convey an order for Mr. Penance's carriage?"

Had an earthquake yawned beneath their feet the shock occasioned by these words could not have been greater. The cold, clear tones of the Duchess could be heard distinctly all over the lawn, and instantly a profound silence took the place of laughter and clatter.

As far as Churchill Penance was concerned this was a social earthquake, which must engulf him and his for ever; but the young man's first thought was of his mother, on whom the chief brunt of this cruel insult must fall.

Churchill Penance had the courage of a lion, and in that moment the spirit of his race was fully awakened. Never had he looked nobler or haughtier than when, in the face of the whole county, he advanced and confronted the Duchess.

"There is some mistake!" he began, firmly. "Either your Grace or Miss Drood have misunderstood—"

"There is no mistake!" interrupted the Duchess, coldly. Then with a haughty inclination of her head. "I regret, Mr. Penance, for the sake of your mother, who was my old friend, that all acquaintance

between your family and mine must cease from to-day."

"My mother had not deserved this," replied Churchill, whose manly pride forbade him to give any explanation of what had passed between him and Ethel; but the Duchess had not spoken one half as haughtily as he.

Mrs. Penance had seemed shocked and petrified for a moment; but now she came forward, looking twice her stature as she laid her hand on her son's arm, and rearing her small head said, proudly,—

"Your Grace of Stanislaugh is a duchess, but I have some of the oldest blood in England in my veins, and my son has the highest title that anyone can win—that of a true gentleman. When you acknowledge that he has done nothing to forfeit that title I may think of resuming that friendship which we have hitherto enjoyed."

Churchill had never felt prouder and fonder of his mother than in that moment; but his face as he felt the convulsive trembling of her slender form, and very tenderly and protectingly he drew her arm within his own, saying calmly,—

"Come, dearest! If you will lean on me the carriage may follow."

And then, raising his hat courteously to the assembled guests, Churchill led his mother away.

"Do sit down, my darling! When you pace up and down in that impatient fashion, like a caged lion, you look very handsome; but I know you are unhappy, and you are so like your father I cannot bear it."

So spake little Mrs. Penance one day, a full week after the Duchess's reception; but two hearts were still quivering in the effects of that day's shock.

Churchill knew that his mother was unhappy, though she made no sign to him; but he understood her, and bitterly he upbraided himself, taking on his shoulders all the blame for her then suffering.

Obedient to the sound of her voice the young man came and dropped down by his mother's side.

"I will do anything you wish, dearest," he said fondly, "if you will only tell me what made you faint to-day?"

Mrs. Penance smiled and stroked the hand which had crept lovingly round her waist; then replied, with an affectation of great cheerfulness,—

"It was the heat, and nothing but the heat, my dear, big son. You know you cannot feel these sultry days as much as I do."

But Churchill was not reassured, and persisted anxiously,—

"But I never knew you to faint before, mother! Are you sure that you are keeping nothing from me? But," almost savagely, "if I thought that, I would get your doctor and pound the truth out of him!"

"Poor Doctor Jones!" laughed Mrs. Penance. Then, more anxiously, "But I think, my darling, it is you who are hiding something from me, and you know I cannot be well unless you are happy."

Churchill started up, as if these words had stung him, and strode about the room like an angry lion, to the great discomfiture of his mother. Then, suddenly pausing before her, he said impulsively—

"Mother, I am a brute, a fool; but the truth is, I can't stand this any longer. I want to get away!"

There was an involuntary movement of the little woman's hand towards her heart,

**Shortly to be commenced, next week.**

her lips paled and tightened; but she recovered herself by an effort, and said calmly—

"To go away, my heart? Where? Where?"

"Right away, darling!" replied Churchill, who was absorbed in his own feelings, and did not notice the pain he was inflicting. "I am sick of England and English society, especially women—heartless, calculating, mercenary."

"You will find them the same everywhere!" interrupted Mrs. Penance faintly.

And with a smile at his mother's unconscious cynicism Churchill rejoined—

"Perhaps so, dearest. But I shall not be a black sheep among them—as I am here—on account of Ethel Dood's story, which I believe, has assumed a hue which renders it unfit for the ears of young and innocent maidens, so it is preserved for circulation in boudoirs, where it is whispered that I offered the Duchess of Stanislau a gross insult; and I tell you frankly, mother, that as I have hitherto been one of society's pets I cannot stand ill-treatment."

Mrs. Penance dropped her head for a moment; and then, looking up said bravely—

"Well, go my darling, when and where you will!"

"Let us go together, little mother!" replied Churchill, eagerly. Then, clasping the tiny form in his arms, he continued hurriedly. "Come to Spain, dearest? I have always wanted to go there, and I know it would do you no end of good!"

But Mrs. Penance only shook her head and smiled, for she well knew that a long journey would be fatal to her; but she would not pain her son with the faintest hint of the truth, nor would she say one word to deter him from going.

"I will stay at home, and think, of you, Church!" she said, wistfully. "I know, my darling, that wherever you are you will not forget me. And now let us say no more about it until the very last moment."

The "very last moment" had come, and Churchill stood outside the stately entrance door of Lockesly Hall, with little Romola in his arms.

"You will be a good little woman to my mother, and you will not forget me, Roma?" said the young man, tenderly.

The child's large eyes flooded with tears, and, laying her cheek against Churchill's, she put her pretty arms round the young man's neck, and said, with an intensity which was not childish—

"I will never forget you! I love you so dearly because you saved Juan, and because Nonnie loves you too."

Then Churchill kissed the small, sweet face, and unclasped the little arms, little rooking of all that lay between that hour and their next meeting. And so he let down the child, and stepped into the trap which was waiting to convey him to the station, not daring once to turn his head towards the window through which he knew that his mother was gazing with straining eyes.

## CHAPTER X.

ACCORDING to the programme which he had planned out Churchill Penance went to Spain, and there, in his aimless wanderings, the young man, by a strange coincidence, fell in with Valentine Eyre, who had come hither with a twofold purpose in view—to find, if possible, the son of whom, on his death-bed, Vyvian Eyre had spoken, and to prosecute the vengeance which he had sworn to take on Zitella, who, according to his firm conviction, was to be found in Spain.

The way in which the two men met was as follows. Churchill Penance, as restless

as an Arab, had halted in a close and dirty seaport town, where the very last thing he expected to see was an Englishman, and least of all, one in his own rank of life. The one hotel or inn the place boasted was uncomfortable beyond all description; and Churchill, who was fastidious to a fault about his surroundings, came to the very wise determination to spend the breathless summer night out on the balcony of the window.

Accordingly he did so, and had smoked several pipes of really excellent tobacco, when the silence was broken by moans and cries as of a person in delirium, and seemed, as he listened longer, to come from the adjoining room.

"Water, water! Oh! Heaven,—how my throat burns! Zitella!—Zitella!"

Churchill heard this agonised cry, and could bear no more. Within a few yards of him a fellow-creature, and one of his own country, was lying in need of a drop of water. Springing to his feet the young man hastened in, and, as he passed through the room, seized the bottle of very doubtful water from his washstand, and this he bore to the relief of the sufferer.

It was Valentine Eyre, who, without his faithful Martin, who had been left sick at Madrid, or any friend, had been struck down with a fever in this horrible den. He had come to this place with a fancied clue to the discovery of Zitella, and his anger and disappointment at finding himself still on the wrong track, combined with the noxious air of the place, and the fatigue which he had undergone, prostrated him in an illness during which the name of his false love was never off his lips, or only exchanged for that of the brother whom he was pledged to seek.

Churchill Penance never left Valentine Eyre from that night until he was once more restored to health; and by that time such a friendship had sprung up between the two men that they were inseparable.

Valentine Eyre, although his was a wrecked and broken life, could not be less grateful to Churchill Penance for the care which had preserved it; and Churchill found, or fancied he found, in Valentine Eyre's melancholy cynicism a spirit congenial to his own.

So sympathising, though exchanging no confidences with one another, the two men wandered about until they found themselves in a little Castilian town called Rio San Vozgo, where they were fortunate enough to find cleanliness combined with quaint beauty, and where, still more wonderful, they found a hotel which boasted an English cook of no mean capacity.

Here one morning Churchill's insatiable love of sight-seeing drew him out of bed about sunrise, so that he might see the market-place in its primal glory, and Valentine, though grumbling profusely, consented to act as cicerone.

The market-place certainly was worth going to see—a large, square enclosure, whose grey walls contrasted picturesquely with the gay dresses of the stall holders, and the peasants, who had poured in from the country round and entered by massive gates, through which the townspeople were pouring in a continuous stream.

Round the market-place were stalls laden with fruit, vegetables, and flowers, and before these the purchasers seemed to throng in hundreds, the object of each individual seeming to be to get as much as possible for a very little money.

In the centre of the square pleasure was represented by a band of gipsies, who danced and juggled or told fortunes; and that their performance was excellent was testified to by the loud clapping and cries of the women, and the cracking of the mulsters' whips.

Through these throngs the two Englishmen pushed their way, with no little difficulty, Churchill delighted with the quaintness and novelty of all, and Valentine, to whom it was quite familiar, grumbled in proportion; but when Churchill gripped his arm and broke into lavish encomiums on a lovely face which had just risen before him from the sea of humanity, Valentine Eyre looked perversely in an opposite direction, and broke into a cynical laugh.

"Saul among the prophets!" he said, almost harshly: "but no women for me, thank you. Still, if you, my friend, have been suddenly stricken by a pair of southern eyes, you may stay and admire them; but as for me I am hungry, and will go home to breakfast, only do not scorch your wings, my poor moth!"

"I shall not go in the way of doing so," replied Churchill, sullenly. "I take no interest in women, but seeing a lovely face I admired it as I should admire a picture. *Voilà tout!*"

And so, a little ruffled with his friend, Churchill Penance kept silence until they stood once more without the gate of the market-place, when the young man discovered that he had dropped a note-book which contained some valuable memoranda; and having searched all his pockets with a like result he determined to re-enter the square and search for the lost article.

"If it was merely a note-book it will be of no use to anyone besides yourself, and will probably be returned to you," said Valentine, who actually suspected that this was but a ruse to catch another glimpse of the lovely Spanish face from whose dangerous vicinity he had drawn his friend away; and, strange to say, his suspicions were strengthened when Churchill rejoined, eagerly,—

"The book contained some notes which were made for my mother, and I would not lose it for the world!"

An incredulous smile hovered round Valentine's mouth as he murmured, pityingly,—

"Ah, yes! 'Childe Harold had a mother not forgot.' I am glad I have none; but beware of Spanish women, Churchill; they are all the worst. They call on their patron saint in the morning, and tell lies all day. Bah! how sickening!"

"To warn me against women is quite needless," interrupted Churchill, haughtily. "I have had one bitter experience;" but he added, more gently, "there are a few who are angels, and one of them is my mother."

"Then go and look for your note-book, and may success attend your footsteps," said Valentine, shortly, and Churchill replied, with restored good humour,—

"Well, I have plagued you enough for one morning, so do not wait breakfast for me," and then the two parted.

"Poor boy!" muttered Valentine, as he passed up the street, and then his thoughts reverted once more to his own affairs. He dwelt more bitterly than usual on the past, in which he had been duped, and his nature warped—warped by the falsehood of another until crime seemed good in his eyes, and revenge, of all things, most noble, he registered anew his vow to take Zitella's life for the wrong which she had done.

"We shall meet," muttered Valentine Eyre, as he entered his temporary abode. "Some day we shall stand face to face, and then—"

He did not say more, but passed up the stairs with the face of a man in some horrible dream.

Valentine Eyre's suspicion of his friend was entirely without foundation, for



Churchill had returned to the market-place solely in the hope of recovering the book which contained notes of all that would be likely to amuse or interest his mother.

But, as Churchill soon found, it was quite hopeless to think of finding anything in the dense mass of people who thronged the market-place; and resolving to come again when the crowd should have somewhat thinned, the young man was about to force his way once more to the gate, when his steps were arrested by the sounds of a fierce struggle, and a woman's voice raised in accents of terror.

Turning hastily in the direction from whence the sounds proceeded, Churchill Penance saw a sight which caused the hot blood of shame and anger to mount in a swift torrent to his cheek and brow, for the crowd had fallen back on either side; and through the vista which was thus afforded Churchill saw a woman struggling violently in the rude grasp of a stalwart ruffian, whose dress betokened him a member of the gipsies who had attracted the young man's attention a little while ago.

The woman's basket had been dragged from her arm in the struggle and trampled on the ground; the late mantilla, which formed a covering for her beautiful head, had also been torn off, and her unloosened hair was streaming like waves of amber round a form which was youthful and exquisitely slender; but all these details were lost for the moment on Churchill Penance. He only saw a woman in dire need, and, exclaiming at the indifference of the crowd, he sprang through them to the assistance of the girl, who was now rending the air with her piercing cries.

"Jesu Maria, save me!" she cried piteously, and as it left her lips the prayer was answered, for Churchill had dealt the gipsy a blow on the forehead with his clenched hand which sent him reeling back on the mass behind him; and then, turning to the trembling girl, Churchill saw the face whose loveliness had but a few moments ago made such an impression on him. It looked lovelier now that it was blanched by terror, and Churchill thought he had never seen anything one-half so lovely as the eyes which were raised in wordless gratitude to his. They seemed two wells of liquid love, and they went right to the very deepest depths of his soul, intoxicating him with their soft charm.

"You have saved me," she murmured in the softest Spanish. "Oh, how can I thank you?"

But though Churchill did not understand her tongue he read her words in her dark, lovely eyes; and, thinking of the violence from which he had rescued her, he turned furiously on the crowd, which did not seem nearly so apathetic now that the gipsy had been overcome.

"Are you brutes or men," he cried wrathfully, "that you could allow a woman to be so treated?" but his words, being in English, were not understood by the Castilian peasants. And then, to his surprise, the beautiful young Spaniard spoke in his own tongue, and, though her voice was trembling, her accent was as pure and cultivated as his own.

"The gipsy," she said, "mistook me for somebody else, and would not be persuaded of his error; but the people of Rio San Vopez hate me because I have the misfortune to be the daughter-in-law of an old miser who oppresses his poor tenants, and they would gladly see me torn piecemeal before them. But, oh! take me away before that wretch," pointing to the gipsy, "recovers from the effects of your blow!"

As the young girl spoke she clung to Churchill's arm; but the young man reassured her by the sight of a revolver which

he whipped from his pocket; and, telling her that he would defend her with his very life, he placed his arm protectingly round the trembling form of his companion, and thus they passed hastily from the unfriendly scene.

But once outside the market gates the girl, with a dignity which was queenly, withdrew herself from Churchill's protecting arm, and begged to be allowed to proceed without escort on her homeward way; but this was an arrangement which Churchill would not sanction.

"Madam," he said, courteously, "in anything else I would obey your commands without dispute; but this is impossible, and pardon me if I say you are too young and lovely to go unprotected through the streets. I wonder," he added indignantly, "that your husband allows it!"

The Spaniard drooped her lovely eyes, and, with a sad inflection of voice, replied,—

"Alas, sir! I am worse than friendless, for my husband is no more, and I am at the mercy of my father-in-law, who has neither love nor consideration for me."

"Then you must allow me to be your protector for the present, and see you in safety to your father-in-law's door," replied Churchill; and then he walked by the young girl's side, but did not offer her the support of his arm, for her beauty made him shrink from what seemed to him would be a gross liberty, and there was the grace of a queen in all her movements.

"How can I thank you?" questioned the girl, as they passed through the silent streets, and Churchill replied gravely,—

"By not again incurring the same danger, Senora."

The Spaniard shook her beautiful head, and looked up with a melancholy light in her eyes.

"Ah! you do not understand," she said, "or you would not make such a request. I am not my own mistress, I am dependent on my father-in-law, and must obey him as a slave obeys his master. I wish," she added, with deep, quiet passion, "that I could go out into the world and earn my own bread; but I promised my poor husband that I would never leave the old man, and I will not break my word."

Churchill felt many chivalrous and tender emotions as he listened to these words, which were spoken with a resignation which he called to himself the fidelity and goodness of an angel.

He longed that it were in his power to shield this lovely girl from all adversity or unkindness; but had he been told that he was in love with the Spaniard he would have laughed the idea to scorn, and yet it was very truth.

"Pardon me, Senora," said the young man at length, "but it so surprises me that you can speak such pure English that I should like to know how you came by the language?"

The Spanish girl drooped her head with such evident pain and confusion that the young man hastened to apologise, and begged most humbly that "Senora" would pardon him for the liberty which he had taken; and suddenly his companion seemed no longer displeased or unhappy, but, looking up, exclaimed, in an impulsive tone,—

"Oh! it was not a liberty! You are kind to take such an interest in me, and—yes! I will tell you all!"

Then, sinking her voice to a whisper, the girl went on,—

"My name is Inez Valdez now. What it was before I married you need not know; for, alas! my father dishonoured that name by a crime for which he atoned with his life, when his lands were confiscated, and I, his only child, was left to the mercy of the world, in which there was one kind

enough to befriend me. This, sir, was a lady of rank, who took me to England as her maid; and now you know how it is that I am so familiar with your language. I married in England," she added, after a pause, "and my husband brought me over here, to leave me a widow in a year!"

"Poor child!" murmured Churchill, tenderly, "you are so young to have had such sorrow!"

"It does not end there," rejoined Inez, and, though she sighed as she spoke, her tone was hard and bitter. "If you knew," she continued, "how cruel my father-in-law is to me, how daily and hourly he taunts me with my father's disgrace! But why?" and she broke off with a little sob, "should I tell all this to you—a stranger?"

"I hope, Senora, that you will not continue to call me by that harsh name?" said Churchill, gently.

Inez gave him a quick look, and then, seeming to come to a sudden determination about him, she said gently,—

"Oh! I think I can trust you; but you must forgive me, for, young as I am, many have deceived me cruelly!" Then, blushing crimson, as with a sudden thought she changed the subject by alluding to the dishevelled state of her hair, to which she put up her hands with a gesture of distress,—

"Oh! how ashamed I am of my plight!" she murmured, in confusion. "What must you think of me?"

"Senora, I only think of the great happiness of being permitted to serve you," replied Churchill gallantly, and again Inez gave him a look less tender than curious.

"Oh!" she said, "I shall doubt your sincerity if you are so ready with compliments; but, after all, though you have served me, and I am deeply grateful, you are in reality a stranger, and why should you take any more trouble for me?"

"I have offended you, and so you punish me," replied Churchill, with a humility which was new to him; and then he added, with resolution, "But, though you may condemn me to walk behind you, I will see you home in safety!"

"And witness the insults which my father-in-law is sure to heap on me!" said Inez, bitterly.

"Let him dare!" began Churchill; but he was interrupted by his companion, who informed him that Pedro Valdez, her father-in-law, was an old man, and as such could not be assailed.

As Inez spoke they turned into a side street, and a little way off Churchill was attracted by the loathsome form of an old man, clad in a coarse gown like a monk, and with thin, white hair surrounded by a velvet skull cap.

"I will introduce you to my father-in-law," said Inez, with a quivering lip, as this unpleasant looking creature approached the pair, and then in tones of alarm she added,—

"Oh! my basket with the fruit and vegetables. It fell from me in the struggle, and until this minute I had forgotten it; but, Jesu Maria! how angry he will be! I scarcely dare meet him!"

"Never mind, Senora," whispered Churchill, "make some excuse, and I will return to the market-place for a fresh supply."

Inez turned her large eyes somewhat scornfully on the speaker, and said, in cold tones,—

"You are very kind; but you are not wise to urge me to deceit. I have seen a great deal of it, but have never yet seen it prosper; and though I am such a coward as to be afraid of violence, I cannot say what is false."

Churchill grew pale with emotion. He

could have fallen then and there to the ground and kissed Inez's feet; but instead of that he said, huskily,—

"Senora, you make me ashamed of myself, but from my heart I thank you!"

And then there was no time for more, because old Pedro Valdez stood before them, striking his stick upon the uneven pavement, and addressing his daughter-in-law in words that Churchill could not understand.

The young man was wondering how he could defend Inez from the old man's anger when the girl turned to him, and said, coldly, in English,—

"Pedro is in an amiable mood this morning. He says he likes the face of my champion, and wishes him to come home to breakfast. But if you are wise," she added, impressively, "you will not accept the invitation."

"I am not wise," replied Churchill. "And, Senora, if it does not displease you, I will break my fast under your roof. Indeed, I am very hungry," he added, with a pleading look; "and so you must not be angry."

There was the faintest possible shrug of Inez's shoulders as she replied, coldly,—

"Come, then, if you will; but you will not care to repeat the visit!"

But to this Churchill made no reply. And so, with the old man walking ahead of them, they found their way to the house of Pedro Valdez.

Churchill could scarcely forbear a shudder as he crossed the threshold and entered a hut where, perhaps, the scarce light might be considered rather a blessing than otherwise, as it made the want of cleanliness and order less perceptible. But the young man's disgust with his surroundings was more for Inez's sake than his own. Was it not preposterous, he asked himself, that so lovely a being should be immured within these sordid walls?

They entered a sort of parlour, where breakfast was spread before their eyes by Inez, during which the young English guest could scarcely restrain his indignation. He watched the white hands moving among the cups and saucers, and longed to seat himself at the meagre board, that he might have the pleasure of touching what she had touched.

The meal, when ready, was of the poorest and coarsest description; but Inez had arranged some glowing flowers in the centre of the table, and her own exquisite presence transformed all.

In his heart Churchill called her a star, a queen; while he ate with appetite food which, under other circumstances, he would not have touched.

As the meal progressed Churchill discovered that Pedro Valdez could also speak English, though in a very different manner to Inez.

The old man said he had picked the language up from his son, who had lived many years in England; and by degrees Churchill became so interested in Pedro's stories of his own youthful prowess as a matador that he lingered over the board and forgot the flight of time.

But at length a visitor arrived who required to speak in private with the old Spaniard, and thus, in his unspeakable happiness, Churchill found himself alone with Inez.

The young girl speedily broke the silence which was so embarrassing to the Englishman.

"You are not, then, disgusted with your surroundings?" she said, in her rich, musical tones; and then, without waiting for Churchill to answer, she went on rapidly—"My father-in-law has taken a fancy to you, and though he is no fit asso-

ciate for you I am glad," and then, with a sigh and a shudder of repugnance, she looked round and added—

"Oh, how I wish he were not so disreputable in his appearance and the house a little cleaner, and then you might be able to help me—oh! so much!"

The words were the most commonplace imaginable; but Inez accompanied them with such superb gestures that Churchill felt as if an angel had spoken.

He saw her clasp her small white hands and raise her lovely eyes, and he could scarcely refrain from falling at her feet.

"Dear Senora," he exclaimed, impulsively, "to help you would be my greatest happiness. Only tell me what I can do."

Inez did not speak at once. A shade as of deep emotion crossed and recrossed her face. She rose and glided through the room, lighting in her agitation on a large black fan, with which she returned once more to her chair; and as she waved it to and fro Churchill felt as if he were subject to some mesmeric influence.

"Ah!" she said at length, "I will tell you, though it is too much to ask from a stranger, to whom I am already indebted; but you must know, sir, that my father-in-law, though well-off, denies me all but the barest necessities of life."

Here Inez paused, but when she saw the young man glance involuntarily at her rich and becoming dress, she went on quickly—

"You wonder where I get such dress, but that is my secret, and why I want you to help me; for I feel sure, sir, you would despise me were I content to dress as my father-in-law does."

Churchill uttered an indignant protest against such an idea, and Inez went on to explain that without her father-in-law's knowledge she had managed to obtain some pupils in the town, whom she taught in their own homes, and by this means she was enabled to dress herself as her husband would wish to see her, and at the same time guard her secret well.

"But lately," she said, mournfully, "my father-in-law seems to suspect something. He watches all my movements, and, fearing discovery, I have for the last two mornings refrained from going out, but if I remain at home a third I shall lose my pupils."

"That would be hard, Senora," replied Churchill, quickly; "but tell me how I am to help you?"

And with a faint blush Inez replied—

"I thought if you would be so good as to stay and listen to my father-in-law's boasts that he would not notice my absence."

Churchill's heart and countenance fell. How, even for Inez's sake, without the charm of Inez's presence, endure the society, perhaps for several hours, of the soured and dirty old Spaniard; but though the prospect was unwelcome he had not the faintest idea of refusing, and when a faint sigh broke from the girl's lips he felt ashamed of himself for his reluctance, and said, quickly—

"Never fear, Senora! you shall go to your pupils, and if your father misses you it will not be my fault."

At that moment Pedro Valdez returned to the pair, and Inez could only reward the Englishman with one swift, speaking glance from her lovely eyes; and a moment later she swept noiselessly from the room, which seemed immediately to become quite unbearable to Churchill Penance.

He manfully redeemed his promise, however, and made himself assume the attitude of a listener to such perfection that Pedro Valdez was led on to tell endless stories, in all of which he himself figured as a daring hero, apparently unconscious that the young

Englishman only understood a very little of his conversation.

But the morning was not passed altogether so innocently, for by-and-by Pedro produced some cards and a bottle of wine, which he proceeded to arrange on a small table; and Churchill saw that if he would serve Inez he must not only play but handle those pieces of cardboard as if he liked them. So with a good grace he seated himself at the table, and soon, to his surprise, he found himself so engrossed in the game that even when the luck turned against him he did not want to give up playing.

At the sound of light feet in the hall outside the play, however, came suddenly to an end, and with guilty haste old Pedro hid the wine and swept the cards pell-mell into a drawer of the table, whispering hastily to Churchill as he did so,—

"Not a word of this to my daughter, for if she knew that I could afford to lose money at cards she would say that I ought to afford to give her your gain."

"But you have won!" said Churchill, rather coldly, thinking now for the first time of his losses; not that he cared for money, but he felt rather ashamed of having played cards with Pedro Valdez.

"I shall lose to-morrow," whispered Pedro, "and I lost at first, but it is an old man's only amusement. Will you come to-morrow and take your revenge?"

"Nonsense! I don't want to win your money," returned Churchill, angrily; "but I wish you would let your daughter-in-law live like a lady!" And as he spoke the young man produced a purse, from which he poured a little shower of gold into the horny palm of old Pedro, whose fingers had not closed over the shining heap before the door opened and Inez entered, causing Churchill to blush with as much confusion as if he had been found out in some dishonourable action, although, to his great relief, the young girl seemed utterly unconscious of what was passing before her eyes.

Then Churchill looked at his watch and discovered that it was midday. He must go, he said; but when old Pedro Valdez begged that he would stay and share another meal the invitation was not seconded by Inez, and the young man somewhat reluctantly took his leave. But, oh! bliss beyond his wildest hope, he was conducted to the door by the beautiful daughter of his host, who lingered behind in the sitting-room to gloat, as the young Englishman supposed, over the heap of gold which had been so suddenly transferred to one of his pockets.

Outside, in the dark, narrow hall, Inez paused a moment and laid her hand on the arm of her companion, who felt his heart throb wildly as the lovely dark eyes were raised to his.

"You have done me a service which I can neither repay nor forget," she whispered, tremulously. "And now one question I would ask you."

"A thousand," replied Churchill, who would gladly have remained all day to be questioned by such fair lips.

Inez clasped her hands; her wonderful eyes fell beneath their jolly lashes.

"You crossed my path," she said, falteringly, "by fate or chance; and though because of your nationality I ought to hate you, I cannot, for you saved my life, as but for you I should have been torn to pieces by that rough crowd, and your face impelled me to trust you; but if you have English friends in the town, and you should meet me when in their company, I would implore of you to let me pass without notice, and not to speak of me at any other time."

"Your word is my law," replied Churchill,



promptly. "I have only one friend in the town. He is English certainly, but you have nothing to fear from Valentine Eyre."

"Valentine Eyre!"

It was almost with a shriek that the name was echoed from Inez's lips; then with white lips she pressed her hands above her heart and murmured, faintly—

"Ah! how strange, how cruel, that the same town should hold me and Valentine Eyre. I hate him!" she continued, "and for his sake I hate and dread the very name of England and all the English. But for Valentine Eyre," she continued, with bitter passion, "my husband would be alive and happy now. The treachery of Valentine Eyre killed him."

"The false villain!" exclaimed Churchill, impulsively. "He shall be my friend no more; but only tell me what he has done and I shall revenge your wrong!"

But Inez shook her head sadly.

"Nay," she said; "why should you quarrel with your friend for my sake, especially when you cannot give me back my husband? Promise me," she added, earnestly, "that you will not quarrel with him, and that you will refrain from mentioning my name!"

"Only let me serve you, Senora, in every way," murmured Churchill, when only too readily he had given this promise, and Inez smiled faintly as she replied—

"Foolish boy! What can I be to you that you should serve me? But you may come again this evening if you will; and now I must return to my father-in-law, or he will suspect!" and Inez flitted indoors, leaving Churchill alone in the street, too dazed for thought.

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 1979. Back Nos. can be obtained through any newsagent.)

## IVY'S PERIL.

### SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

The mother of Ivy Carew has met her death under very suspicious circumstances many years before the story begins, and Ivy, who is living with her guardian, Sir John Fortescue, at Starham, is dimly conscious that a mystery surrounds her life. Meadow View, in which Ivy was born, has recently been let to George White, and his sister, who take more than ordinary interest in their neighbours. The Rev. Mr. Ainslie recognises in the sister of Mr. White the woman who visited him, under peculiar conditions, many years before, just prior to Ivy's mother's death. Sir John Fortescue and the millionaire are fast friends, and it is evident that the baronet does not see to what a pass matters are drifting. Meanwhile Paul Beresford has declared his love for Ivy and Lady Fortescue is anxious to see them married. The news of their engagement comes as a surprise to Mr. White and his sister, but they do not openly show their uneasiness. Sir John is prevailed upon to delay the marriage for six months and to undertake a trip to Australia, and his wife accompanies him, and during the voyage they become very friendly with a passenger who eventually proves of great service to them. Paul and Ivy are separated. Mrs. Austin taking charge of Ivy, whose letters to Paul, at first warm and loving, after a time grow quite few and formal. The White's depart from London suddenly and leave no trace behind. News reaches Paul that Ivy is suffering, and in his search for the racial White, he opportunely meets Dr. Ward who attended Ivy's mother in her last illness.

### CHAPTER IX.

**S**IR JOHN FORTESCUE often said gratefully he had known but little trouble. Perhaps, as a result of this, or perhaps from his natural disposition, he did not bear doubt or uneasiness at all well, and Giles Brandon found in him a most desponding companion as they drove together to the place where John Foster kept his small store, and the ancient Sandy acted as nursery-maid, and otherwise made himself generally useful.

"I shall never get over it!" said poor Sir John, sadly. "To think of the pride I have taken in Southlands—the improvements I have made there—and now that it should pass to such a creature as this disreputable old vagabond!"

"Gently!" remonstrated Brandon. "I'm afraid Old Sandy is a vagabond, pure and simple, but his son is really an industrious sort of man, and the boy you saw just now at Mortimer's might be made something of."

Sir John groaned.

"Think of his freckles!"

Giles Brandon thought these blemishes by no means the worst feature of the young gentleman in question; but he brought Sir John back peremptorily to the business in hand by the startling inquiry,—

"What do you mean to do when you see Mr. Foster? Shall you introduce yourself at once, and demand whether he wrote the letter which brought you here?"

Sir John looked staggered.

"I don't know."

"You must be very careful not to give the old man the slightest hint that you believe in his claim."

"I think you'd manage it best," returned Sir John, it must be confessed rather helplessly. "You see, I've never been used to business."

The store was reached at last. It rejoiced in the name of the "Red Boot," a scarlet Wellington being emblazoned on a big signboard, which bobbed to and fro outside with every gust of wind.

As to the interior of the store, it would be hard to say what it did not contain—a little of most things, from bedsteads to paraffin oil—an all-pervading smell of the latter, and a general dirtiness perceptible to sight and touch; but what struck the visitors most was the woman who stood in the background, and was evidently the mistress of the "Red Boot."

She was young still—a good bit under forty; but hard work and the cares of a large family made her look much more, and the trials of a workaday life, instead of making her fade and pine, had apparently had just the contrary effect.

Mrs. Foster gave you the impression of a flower (to be polite) hopelessly full blown. Her dress simply looked bursting at every seam, and her hands were so fat and podgy that you marvelled her wedding-ring didn't snap in twain with the effort of encircling her finger, where it looked—to speak metaphorically—uncommonly like a very tiny, narrow valley of gold between two overhanging mountains of flesh.

She wore a large-patterned print gown, and her hair, of a whitey-brown shade, was cut short to save trouble, a style which did not suit her massive, coarse features.

There was nothing vicious or evil about Mrs. Foster's appearance; but she was not, it must be confessed, the sort of woman a gentleman of ancient lineage would like to contemplate as the future mistress of his estate—the wife of his heir.

Mrs. Foster had an eye to business.

"And what can we do for you to-day?" she asked, briskly. "There's a fine lot of fruit fresh in this morning, and a prime selection of groceries and dried goods fresh from the old country. While, if it's anything for your good ladies, we've a box of fall veils just come from Paris, and not opened."

Sir John strove to fancy his "good lady" wearing anything that had come out of such a place; but Brandon was quite equal to talking to the proprietress of the "Red Boot."

"Good-morning, Mrs. Foster. Don't you

remember me? Your boy's with my son-in-law, Mortimer, you know!"

Mrs. Foster's manner changed; it became almost confidential.

"To be sure. Mr. Brandon, of course. I did hear you'd come back from England. And how is Mrs. Mortimer and the baby? Ah! I reckon she's real proud of it. It's always the way with number one; whereas when it comes to number nine you almost forget to be proud in thinking of the extra mouths to feed."

"Very true. My daughter is quite well, thank you. The fact is, Mrs. Foster, we've not come shopping this morning. This gentleman," and he laid his hand on Sir John's arm, "is very anxious to see your father-in-law."

"The old 'un?" exclaimed Mrs. Foster, irreverently. "Why, then, Mr. Brandon, I do believe he's got second sight, or whatever you call it. These last four days he's not stirred from the house, because he's been so sure someone 'd come. I thought it was a fad—when folks get to seventy they're full of fancies. I'll call him."

There entered a man so old and wizened-looking that it was very difficult to judge what he had been like. His hair was white as snow, and being worn long on his neck might have given him a venerable aspect but for a small red cap stuck on the back of his head, which reminded one dimly of a clown.

His clothes were threadbare, but had once been good, and were evidently relics of better days.

To Sir John's intense surprise he wore a signet ring on his little finger, and in spite of his shabby attire and mean surroundings, he moved and spoke as a gentleman, receiving his visitors with perfect ease, and greeting them on terms of equality.

"I had expected you," he said, with a courtly bow. "Maria Anne," to his daughter-in-law, "you see before you the head of the family, Sir John Fortescue, baronet, of Southlands, Monmouthshire, my worthy and respected kinsman."

Maria Anne looked very much as though she thought the "old 'un" a little off his head.

"He must have been drinking," she said to Brandon; "though I did think I'd locked everything up; but there, he's that crafty there's no standing him. Don't you mind a word he says, sir, nor your friend neither; he's quite harmless, but he's just daft on that name. He'll sit and talk of the Fortescues for hours, and now he's managed to persuade himself he's one himself. 'Here, gran-dad,' she said, coming close to the old man, and shouting into his ears, 'Your brains are gone wool-gathering, I think. This gentleman is pa to Alick's master, and he's brought a friend from England.'"

Sandy nodded his head emphatically.

"Just so. Be easy, Maria Anne, be easy! You'll die, 'my lady,' and your nine children will live in luxury. We are the descendants of Alexander, Fortescue, and when once the breath's out of this gentleman's body we'll be richer than you've ever dreamed of."

He led the way to a small room opening from the store, doubtless thinking so important a conversation should be carried on more privately.

Maria Anne, excited either by the visions of having herself called "my lady" or the thought of her nine children revelling in luxury, left future customers of the "Red Boot" to attend on themselves, and followed the three gentlemen, her curiosity fully aroused.

"I wrote to you," said old Sandy, putting one hand affectionately on Sir John's who, we grieve to say, not feeling

cousinly, shook it off. "I saw your name in the prospectus of the Delonda Gold Mines. I heard you were rich in all but children, I looked around, and beheld John and Maria Anne, with nine hungry mouths to be filled; and I felt the moment had come. I and mine should no longer languish in poverty, but should reascend to the sphere whence our ancestor fell."

He spoke just as though that sphere was a kind of visible platform or dais to which he and his descendants would attain by a prosaic ladder.

Sir John was dimly conscious the old man was getting the best of it when Giles Brandon interposed.

"Excuse me, Mr. Foster, but it's very easy for you to say you're Sir John's cousin; but as the matter is a very serious one, involving the disposal of a title and large property, what we require is not words, but proof."

Maria Anne looked perplexed. The matter was more serious than she had supposed. A keen-sighted practical woman, she had always looked on Sandy's high-flown expectations as nonsense pure and simple. Noticing Mr. Brandon's grave impassive face, and Sir John's sad gloomy silence, she began to think there might be something in the "old un's" romancing after all.

"Proof!" exclaimed Sandy, moving his cap theatrically. "And do you doubt my word?"

"Not in the least!" said Giles, more glibly than truthfully; but you see a court of law might require something more than mere words. Besides neither Sir John nor I are quite clear of your story, save that you claim to be descended from his great uncle, Alexander Fortescue, who emigrated to Australia more than seventy years ago."

"I am his son—his only son!"

"And the proofs? Pardon me, but as you could not have been alive when Alexander Fortescue left England—part of your story rests on other people's testimony, of which you must have some proof!"

The old man took out a pocket-book almost as shabby as himself. From it he selected a folded paper, yellow, and worn with age. He gave it into Brandon's hand.

"I trust you!" said old Sandy, with an air of supreme grandiloquence. You are rich and powerful. You would not crush an old man by taking from him his most treasured possession—the evidence of his father's truth, and his mother's honour?"

Brandon opened it carefully. It was so rotten he almost feared it would fall to pieces in his hands.

It was a marriage certificate of some seventy years before, in the days when New South Wales was in its infancy, and known only as a penal settlement. But the document looked genuine and authentic. It would, of course have to be ascertained whether there ever had been a clergyman in the place of the name by which it was signed, as the words Government Chaplain were appended. No doubt that matter would be easy; for the rest the paper simply testified to the marriage of Alexander Fortescue and Mary Grey. The date and age coincided with what was known of Sir John's ancestor, and, moreover, the parentage was correctly given. Giles Brandon felt as if Old Sandy had scored one, when he returned him the treasured paper.

"I have no doubt in the world that is a genuine document, but it does not prove your case."

"Not prove my case!" cried the old un. "Why what more proof can you want?"

"Firstly, how are we to know there was ever a child born of the marriage; and, if so, how do you prove yourself to be that

child? Secondly, if your name is Fortescue, why have you been known all these years, even to your own children, as Alexander Foster?"

Sandy waved his hand theatrically, and took two more papers from the precious pocket-book; the very air of triumph with which he handed them to Brandon, showed that he felt sure of victory.

And when they had read these two documents, both Giles and Sir John had a conviction that, improbable as was the story it must be true, for one paper certified the baptism of Walter Alexander, son of Alexander Fortescue, and Mary, his wife; while the other set forth the marriage of Mary Fortescue, widow, with Thomas Foster.

"I was but two years old when my mother married again," said Sandy, with an air of childlike simplicity. "I have been told my stepfather entertained a morbid jealousy of his predecessor, but was kind enough to me. He made, however, one stipulation, which my mother agreed to. I was never to know I was not his own son, but to bear the name of Foster."

"I was a married man when my mother became a widow for the second time. The whole truth was then divulged to me. These precious papers, this ring, one or two family portraits, and other trifling memorials, were bequeathed me by my mother, who affirmed, with her dying breath, that I should one day take my place amid England's aristocracy. I have lived in this hope, but hope deferred makes the heart weary; and from love and anxiety for their welfare I have never told my children the true story of their greatness, and contented myself with insisting that my eldest son should be married in his real lawful name; and that every one of his children should be christened Fortescue."

Maria Anne had listened with unabated interest.

"He talks just like a book," she cried admiringly, as Sandy finished. "Just think what a fortune he might have made if only he'd kept away from drink! He's a wonderful old man!"

"Its blood that tells, Maria Anne," said the subject of his praise modestly. "My birth has been hidden amid mean surroundings, but nothing would stifle the talent I inherited from my father; and now, my dear, I feel exhausted." His voice changed by magic to a wheedling key. "This conversation has overtaxed my strength, and the excitement of meeting with my long-lost cousin has exhausted my old frame. Don't you think, Maria Anne, that a tumbler of whisky and water cold (you could mix it yourself if you feared my making it too strong) would reinvigorate me for the fight I am going to make, not so much for my own sake, Maria Anne, as for yours, and that of your nine children?"

"These gentlemen also"—he indicated Sir John and Brandon by a wave of his hand even more affected than the last—"are doubtless thirsty; they have had a long ride, and in our tropical climate the throat soon becomes parched. I would suggest you should offer them hospitality."

Maria Anne was quite willing, and vanished in search of the required refreshment. Sir John looked appealingly at Brandon, as though to ask whether they could not at once take leave; his proud spirit was suffering unknown humiliation.

"It is necessary," whispered Brandon. "The old man's tale seems perfectly consistent; but surely there is a flaw somewhere? We must sit here talking, and try to find out where the weak point in his case lies."

Sir John would have given anything to escape. A most abstemious man, to drink

spirits in the daytime was quite unnatural to him, and when the whisky bottle arrived he barely took sufficient to colour the water he had already poured out.

Brandon followed his example; but old Sandy was quick to seize advantage of his daughter-in-law's temporary absence, and helped himself so liberally that Sir John grew quite hopeful of his betraying his secrets after such copious libations.

But though they lingered another hour at the "Red Boot," and though Sandy chatted glibly the whole time, the two men gathered not the slightest information likely to be of use to them.

They asked Mr. Foster point-blank why he had never attempted to claim relationship with the Fortescue family before, and he replied his mother instructed him that the property being entailed he would gain nothing by so doing; if ever the direct line became extinct he was the next heir, in which case the family lawyers would trace him out. But for that contingency he would gain nothing.

"I took a mighty interest in you," said Sandy, frankly, to Sir John. "I bought a baronetage, and I looked you up. I traced out the family. I knew my father was the next heir to the Sir John who was living at Southlands when he came here. Then I questioned folks who came from England, and I found that Sir John had only one child. You didn't marry till you were nigh on forty yourself, Sir John, and it was an awful blow to me. Then every five years I'd make inquiries of someone I knew whose brother was an English lawyer! but always the same answer came back—you had no son. I might have waited till you were dead, only my son John is rather soft (Maria Anne has twice the spirit), and I thought he might not manage to get his own; so when I saw your name on the mining paper I made up my mind I'd write to you at once."

He spoke with the utmost simplicity. Giles Brandon looked at him keenly, and marvelled. Was his story true, or was the whole thing a fraud, got up to trade on Sir John?

Giles knew the world very well, and was perfectly aware that such frauds have been, and will be again; but then they are seldom the work of any one man, and he well on to seventy.

As Brandon watched old Sandy there was a question he asked in vain, and could not fathom—was the man knave or fool?

"I don't want to go to England myself," said the old un, complacently. "I reckon I'm too old to shine in society now, and I've not much longer to live; but I should like to know that John and Maria Anne would be great people. You might give them a house on your estate, cousin, and then they'd be there handy when the summons came for you."

I wonder if there was ever yet a man of sixty who liked people to talk in his presence of the time when "the summons should come for him?"

There may have been such prodigies, but I never met one; and certainly Sir John Fortescue had no claim or pretensions to such sublimity.

"You will propose next that the whole family should reside with me?" he said, frigidly.

"No, I shouldn't. Maria Anne has a fine spirit of her own, and she and your missis might not hit it off together; besides, there's not many wives who'd care to see too much of the woman whose children would step into her husband's shoes. There's two sorts of women, I take it, who never understand each other—them as have children and them that haven't."



He had never moved in society, this old decrepit grandfather; but he had seen many women in his own rank of life, and womanhood is pretty much the same in its prejudices—gentle or simple.

Old Sandy had hit on a truth that few people seem able to comprehend—men least of all. Why should any woman who has a baby consider herself incomparably the superior of her neighbour who has none? Yet it is invariably the case.

The baby owner may be a careless, slatternly wife, her house neglected, her husband worried by her extravagance, the baby itself given over to a hireling's hands; yet in her own opinion, and in that of all mothers, the baby owner will have fulfilled the ideal of wifehood, and accomplished her destiny far more completely than her next-door neighbour, who, perhaps, works twice as hard, who makes her husband's home the centre of comfort, and spends her whole life in the attempt to make him happy.

Yet such is the world's prejudices. All the faults and failings of the one woman will be excused, all the slatternly ways and careless habits forgiven, on account of the baby, who is "such a tie"; and Mrs. So-and-So's industry, frugality, and good temper will be passed over by a sneering "of course she can dress well, and be economical; she has nothing else to do—it would be very different if she had a child!"

When Sir John thought of his Lucy, and looked at Maria Anne, he felt very sure that the further apart they were kept the better it would be for both.

"Your family have not the slightest claim on me!" he said, very coldly. "You must be mad to think of such a thing!"

"Look here!" returned Sandy, slowly; "there's one question I'd like to ask—and I think I've a right to an answer—if your great uncle, Alexander Fortescue, was alive, wouldn't he be your heir?"

"My good man!" interposed Giles; "don't you know you claim this very Alexander as your father? How in the name of goodness could he be Sir John's heir! Why, he must be long past ninety now, and you told us yourself he had been dead for years!"

"If he were alive," persisted Sandy; "would he be the heir?"

"There can be no harm in telling you he would!" replied Sir John. "I have no blood relations in the world excepting this same Alexander and his descendants. If you prove yourself his son I have no choice in the matter. Southlands, the town house, the plate, furniture and jewels, carriages and horses—all must be yours as soon as the breath is out of my body; but—hear me out—so long as I live you cannot claim one penny piece."

"I know that!" said Sandy, nodding his head; "but when once I've proved myself the heir Horton Ranch will be glad enough to let me have what I want!"

"No he!"

"If John and I club together, and both sign papers promising to pay up at your death, I reckon we'll get as much ready-money as we want. I saw Horton Ranch myself, and he as good as promised it last week. All I'd got to do, he said, was to prove my case."

And as Giles Brandon, and his guest returned sadly homewards there was a sad conviction in both their minds that the "old un" would succeed in proving it. They found Lady Fortescue alone, and looking very anxious.

"I have been making inquiries, and there is no mail in for another fortnight. Oh! John I do want to hear from Ivy so badly! We left her in December, you

know, and it will be the end of February before we can get a letter!"

"And then it will be six weeks old," said Brandon, kindly. "Never mind, Lady Fortescue, you must remember that in another three months your exile will be over. Think what it must be to us who have to part from our children for years!"

She smiled.

"I am afraid I am very selfish. Now, do tell me all you have done to-day. I want to know if you have made acquaintance with Cousin Alexander?"

Sir John would have spoken, but Giles interposed.

"We have seen the man who claims to be Cousin Alexander. I confess myself I have grave doubts of his identity!"

Sir John would not be silenced. He broke in now with something that sounded very like a sob.

"Only think, Lucy, the man is a drunkard—a regular old vagabond; and his son, who will be Sir John, I suppose, some day, keeps a most common little shop, so dirty you can hardly breathe there. We saw his wife, and she looked infinitely less ladylike than your cook!"

Lady Fortescue shivered.

"As bad as that?"

"Things do look black!" confessed Brandon; "but I have not given up hope yet. I cannot bear to think of that woman ever bearing your title, Lady Fortescue; and I think if only we make urgent inquiries and spend money freely, we must light on some clue which will expose the whole imposture, if needs be. To save Southlands from such owners you would stay a little longer at the Antipodes, I am sure!"

She looked brightly into her husband's face.

"I will stay as long as over it is necessary. If we are kept very long, and Mr. Brandon grows impatient, I must let someone else dress Ivy for her wedding. It will be a disappointment, but it can't be helped."

"Is your niece going to marry a Mr. Beresford?"

"Why, Mr. Brandon, I am sure I have told you so long ago."

"I never noticed the name before. Of course it is common enough, but it has very strange associations for me."

"Paul's grandfather made his fortune in Australia," said Lady Fortescue, thoughtfully; "but you can't possibly have known him."

"Oh, no! I only know one person of the name of Beresford."

"Perhaps it is a relation? Paul said he might have relations out here!"

Brandon shook his head.

"It could not possibly be a relation, for the person I am thinking of stands quite alone in the world. When I came out here, a young man with no present fortune, and very hazy prospects, I met with very great kindness from this same person. I may say I have gone on receiving kindnesses from the same quarter ever since."

"You speak so mysteriously."

"Do I? Before you leave me I must take you to Beresford House, and introduce you to my friend; it has been a kind of second home to my children all their lives. I took my wife from it a bride; in fact, the name of Beresford is so interwoven with my life I can't help thinking you could not have mentioned it as that of Miss Carew's fiancé."

"Very likely not," said Sir John. "You know, Lucy, you nearly always speak of the young fellow as Paul. He's a fine lad, I can tell you, Brandon, and it would be no hardship for anyone to own him as a

relation. Why, if I had such an heir I could die happy."

A week passed on, almost too fast in one way; for Sir John and Mr. Mortimer, who acted as his legal adviser, found that to shake old Sandy's story would be a most troublesome and lengthy process.

The old man being hard on seventy, it was well-nigh impossible to find any living person who could remember the circumstances of his birth. The next best thing was to find some one who had known his mother as the *ex-devant* Mary Grey, lived to see her grandchildren. This brought the period down quite five-and-twenty years later. It was hopeless to seek for a witness who could vouch for what took place seventy years before; but it did seem possible to discover some one who recollected a lady who really had been alive little more than forty years ago.

Advertisements were inserted lavishly in all the leading papers; handsome payment was offered anyone acquainted with Mary Grey, *alias* Fortescue, *alias* Foster, if they would communicate with Mr. Mortimer; but the days flew onwards, and still no answer came.

The middle of February brought a letter from Ivy; not a cheerful letter, such as Lady Fortescue had hoped for, but one written in evident dejection.

Christmas had been horribly dreary away from home, Paul was in Scotland, and would not be with her, he seemed very busy. Mr. White and Mrs. Austin were kindness itself, but she missed her uncle and aunt; indeed, she was counting the days until they could be home.

"The poor child seems very sad," said Lady Fortescue, gravely.

"My dear Lucy," cried Sir John, whose temper was rather short in these days in consequence of all he suffered about Sandy, Maria Anne, and the rest of the Foster tribe. "Girls who are in love always fancy themselves sad; they think it interesting. Ivy has nothing whatever to complain of. She was quite ready to desert us for Paul Beresford, so she can't wonder if we leave her for necessary business. As to Paul being too busy to come for Christmas, I think all the better of him for sticking to his work. I daresay the girl was feeling hipped when she wrote. You see she says she has a cold. Long before this, no doubt, her lover has come back from Edinburgh, and they are billing and cooing like two young turtle doves, and not caring a bit whether the elderly uncle and aunt are at the Antipodes or not."

Lady Fortescue would not agree with him, but by the return mail she sent a letter to Ivy brimming over with love and tenderness.

Lady Fortescue was feeling very troubled about the Foster family and their claims. It was a relief to her to pour out the whole heart to her niece.

"The Delonda mines don't seem to have much of Sir John's attention," said Brandon, soon after this.

"He has too much else to worry him!" said his wife, dejectedly.

"Then don't tell him! The bubble has burst, and every penny he put into the concern will be lost. It's not so hard for Sir John, since the ten thousand pounds will be only a fleabite to a man of his wealth. I was wondering whether I should tell him. It's in all the papers, but I don't believe he ever opens a paper, unless it's to read those wretched advertisements."

"And no answer comes to them Mr. Brandon; I am beginning to despair."

"You must not. Just think! To have

the information we require a person must be from sixty to seventy years of age! At that time of life people don't hurry themselves. Depend upon it Mrs. Foster's confidante will turn up soon!"

"There is another thing I wanted to say Mr. Brandon." She hesitated. "We are, trespassing on your hospitality most terribly. We have been here over a month, and we came for a week!"

"I can only assure you, Lady Fortescue, the longer you stay the better I shall be pleased. I am deeply interested in Sir John's troubles, and I shall be very sorry if you desert my house until you leave Sydney."

"But——"

"I am a lonely man, and it is a pleasure to me to have gifts. Obligation!" as she murmured something. "I assure you it is on the other side; but if you are so terribly punctilious you can repay any fancied service a hundred times, when you get to England, by going to see my little maids, and writing me a full account of them."

Lady Fortescue never made another attempt to leave the house where she was so comfortable, but she registered a mental vow that the two Brandon girls should be Ivy's bridesmaids, and that they should spend a part of every holiday at Southlands.

But things began to look very dark for poor Sir John's hopes. No answer came to any of the advertisements; the whole Foster family appeared in new garments, Allick deserted Mr. Mortimer and took a stool at Horton Ranch's, because he felt it "against his conscience to serve a man who was trying to rob his family of their lawful inheritance," and worst, and, in Brandon's eyes, strongest proof of all of Sandy's success, Horton Ranch himself drove the old man out in his new buggy, and introduced him to more than one client as "Mr. Fortescue."

It was March now, the advertisements had been in for more than a month without obtaining the slightest result.

"I shall wait two months longer, and sail for England on the first of May," said Sir John, dejectedly, one morning. "After all, Lucy, when we are dead and gone I suppose the thought of that woman reigning at Southlands can't trouble us in our graves?"

With a kiss and a good-bye he left the house, and his wife shed some of the most bitter tears she had ever known as she sat in her own room and thought over her disappointment.

Her meditations were interrupted by her maid bringing her a letter.

"From Mrs. Mortimer?" she asked. "Is there any answer?"

"There's a carriage waiting my lady, but the note is not from Mrs. Mortimer."

Lady Fortescue tore it open hurriedly; it was written in pretty old-fashioned characters on a sheet of thin, glazed paper:—

"MADAM,—I have waited, hoping that some of the late Mrs. Foster's acquaintances might come forward to give the information your husband needs, since there are private reasons which make it very painful for me to speak of that lady or her family.

"But as my dear friend, Giles Brandon, told me this morning, the advertisements remained unanswered, it seems my duty not to withhold the little that I know. Would you come to me yourself, and let me tell you with my own lips? The theme for me is a very sad one, but I have heard enough of you from Giles not to fear your

making my task harder. You may know from him that I am a helpless invalid, otherwise I would come to you instead of troubling you to call on me. My carriage will wait to bring you, and as suspense and expectation are very wearying to an old woman like me, I hope you will not refuse to come soon to—

Yours faithfully,

"MONA BERESFORD."

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 1974. Back Nos. can be obtained through any Newsagent.)

## GEMS

It is always safe to learn even from our enemies.

A GENTLEMAN is a rarer thing than some of us think for.

PEOPLE who say nothing can offend as deeply as people who say too much.

THERE is only one thing which wins a battle, and that is straight shooting.

THE true use of speech is not so much to express our wants as to conceal them.

THE best way to do good to ourselves is to do it to others; the right way to gather is to scatter.

'TIS not chance nor yet fate; 'tis the greatness born with him and in him that makes a man great.

LET us be of good cheer, remembering that the misfortunes hardest to bear are those that never come.

## A SONG OF LOVE.

I think of you by day,  
I dream of you by night—  
All in a happy way  
Of love and pure delight;  
It is when the spring  
Begins in vales to show,  
And birds in rapture sing,  
And flowers in fragrance grow.

A change has come to me  
And poesy is the spell,  
All things in love I see,  
And you with all things dwell.  
I hear your voice divine  
Behind the bird and brook,  
And your sweet glances shine  
From every dell and nook.

You have bewitched my soul,  
And form of life a part,  
Your spirit has control  
Of all my inner heart.  
A gladness like the spring  
My nature sweetly thrills,  
And birds a-near me sing,  
While beauty crowns the hills.

W. B.

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lovely pearl white by  
using PEARLINE,  
also prevents **BLUSHING**  
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## SOCIETY

THE statue of the King which is to be placed under the great dome of the Glasgow Exhibition is 16 feet in height, and will stand on a pedestal 10ft. high. The King is represented in his Field-Marshal's uniform, wearing the Crown, and holding in his right hand the sceptre of power.

EDINBURGH is greatly elated at the prospect of a revival of Court ceremonies at Holyrood Palace. Little doubt seems to be entertained among the citizens now that it is the King's intention to stay for a time at the palace when the period of mourning is ended. There has been no Royal Court in Edinburgh since 1850, and some disappointment was caused because Queen Victoria did not renew any Court functions at Holyrood, in spite of the inducements offered by the carrying out of extensive improvements at the palace in 1857.

THE Duke and Duchess of Fife, who are staying at Brighton until the end of April, will visit Glasgow for the opening of the Exhibition on May 2. After this they will settle at their villa at Sheen, on the borders of Richmond Park, until the middle of July. The Duke and Duchess of Fife will spend a month during the summer at Duff House, Banffshire, before going to Mar Lodge, Aberdeenshire, for the shooting season.

THE Royal Family of Denmark is so closely linked with our own that English people naturally take an interest in the Danish festivals. A few days ago Christian IX. entered upon his eighty-fourth year, and at this advanced age enjoys a measure of health that enabled him to take an active part in the celebration of the anniversary. King Christian was born more than a year before Queen Victoria, and with the exception of the Grand Duke of Luxemburg his Majesty has no peer in age on the thrones of the world; though some Sovereigns exceed him in the length of their reign. By a curious chance, George, the second son of the King of Denmark, has reigned for a longer period over Greece than his father has over his native kingdom, George having been elected King of the Hellenes in March 1865, while King Christian did not ascend the throne until six months later.

PAUL I., Tsar of Russia, who was assassinated on May 6, 1801, left an iron box at Gatchina with the strict injunction that it was not to be opened until 1901. The Tsar, it seems, is very curious to have its mysterious contents thoroughly examined and handed over to the national archives. Few people are perhaps aware that there exists in our Roll Office a sealed-up bag of letters and documents which once belonged to Queen Elizabeth and has never been opened. It seems that, according to tradition, it contains the most secret correspondence of "our great Eliza" and that it can only be examined with the joint consent of the reigning Sovereign, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Lord Chancellor—who, considering that Queen Elizabeth and her affairs are ancient history, might now be induced to see for themselves, if not for the public, what the bag really contains.

Miss Portia Knight, who has commenced an action for breach of promise against the Duke of Manchester, is the daughter of a lawyer of Salem, Oregon, and was educated at the Snell College, Oakland, California, where she graduated in 1894. She made her theatrical debut as Madeline in "Belphegor," and later she was seen as Cordelia. Miss Knight came to London about fifteen months ago, and, with influential introductions, obtained the entrée into the best society.

## STATISTICS

ENGLAND exported last year no less than 1,114,341 dozens of mineral waters manufactured in Great Britain, and imported 1,240,560 dozens mineral waters bottled abroad. In London alone 25,000 people are engaged in the mineral water industry and allied trades, and in the metropolis 24,000,000 is now spent every year on mineral waters by the consumers, while it has been computed that in the whole of the United Kingdom eight times that amount was similarly spent.

If the talk of duty is placed upon sugar brewers and distillers in the United Kingdom will be considerably affected. Last year they used 3,740,522 cwt. of sugar, including equivalents of syrups, 1,087,537 cwt. of maize and rice, and 60,742,700 bushels of malt and grain, which made 37,404,383 barrels of beer and 60,110,067 gallons of spirit, which paid a very heavy duty. Something like 1,600,000 tons of sugar were used last year in the manufacture of mineral waters and which paid no duty.

THE question of the relation of drunkenness to meteorological conditions has recently been investigated by Mr. Edwin G. Dexter, an American observer. Mr. Dexter has published a long account of his investigations, from which it appears that, taking the occurrence of drunkenness in the different months of the year, he found that it was 47 per cent. less in June than in December. He thinks this difference too great to be attributed to mere accident. By comparison of the statistics of police-court "drunks" with special weather conditions, he shows that the number of the latter is increased by low temperature, to some extent by high barometer, by high humidity, and also by high wind.

## THE HAIRPIN.

A WOMAN is never wholly defenceless while she has a hairpin left.

Now a man could not do anything with a hairpin. Turn him loose to the world with no pockets, and nothing but a hairpin to help himself with, and what would become of him? You might as well bury him at once, and have an end of him.

But in the hands of a woman a hairpin will accomplish wonders. With it she can button her shoes, untie knots, fasten her shawl, manœuvre her finger nails, fasten on a button, pin on her hat, secure her veil, open a car window, pick a lock, handle a red-hot kettle, pull a cork, cut the leaves of a magazine, rip out a seam, crimp her hair, trim a lamp, kill a fly, put a spider out of doors, adjust a window screen, and perform lots of other feats which necessity from time to time suggests.

The hairpin, as we of to-day know it, is a comparatively recent invention. Our grandmothers used to wear shell combs of immense size, and around them they built up the massive structures of their tresses, until their heads were bigger than their bodies, and they were compelled to wear bonnets as large as windmills, and about as symmetrical.

But the hairpin? The useful, necessary, ever-ready hairpin! It has been elaborated into various styles and shapes, and it is dirt cheap, and also so expensive that common people couldn't even look at it; but for practical, everyday service, the simple bent wire is just the thing. And no woman can ever be called helpless or defenceless so long as she has a hairpin to her name!

## FACETIÆ.

HUSBAND (angrily): "Don't forget, madam, that you are my wife." Wife: "Oh, never fear. There are some things one can't forget."

SHE: "Why should you doubt my sincerity when I assure you that I love you?" He: "I don't, dear, I was only wondering how long it would last."

THE PRIVILEGE OF THE RICH.—"But, ma, Uncle John eats with his knife." "Hush, dear; Uncle John is rich enough to eat with a fire shovel if he prefers it."

WHAT MURPHY SAID.—"Murphy wor always game." "He wor." "Phwat did he say whin th' inomy blew his head off?" "Phwat did he say? He said, 'Oi dare yez to do it again!'"

JIMSON: "What became of that man who had twenty-seven medals for saving people from drowning?" Dock worker: "He fell in one day when he had them all on, and the weight of 'em sunk him."

GILES: "I don't like that barber's funny anecdotes." Miles: "Why, what's wrong with them?" Giles: "The illustrations are painful." Miles: "The illustrations?" Giles: "Yes; he uses original cuts."

MR. MEERKS: "Did that letter from your mother have the usual woman's postscript?" Mrs. Meerks: "Only a little short one, but it was to the point. She wanted to know if your mother is still stuck on our hands."

ETHEL: Oh, Emily, I had such a dreadful accident the other day, I broke two of my front teeth." Emily: "How painful. How did it happen?" Ethel (thoughtlessly): "They fell off the sideboard, and I accidentally trod on them."

PSYCHOLOGICAL.—"Do you believe in the power of mind over matter?" asked the mystical man. "No," answered the practical friend. "I believe in the power of matter over mind. I have known a dull, insensate tack-hammer, by one swift rap on the thumb, to make a man say things that he had not thought of for years."

THE WORST OF ALL.—Mrs. Heartless: "Just to think, my husband fell and broke—and broke—" Mrs. Simpythethik: "There, dear, I heard all about it; the poor man broke his leg. It's a great affliction, I know, but—" Mrs. Heartless: "Oh, I didn't mean that. You haven't heard the worst. He was carrying my new Venetian vase when he fell, and he broke it, too."

A SENSITIVE TOUCH.—"Doctor," said the rheumatic patient, "you seem to hunt for the sore spots." "I know them the moment I put my fingers on them," replied the specialist, who was giving the patient's joints and muscles a kneading. "I don't have to hunt for them. That is a part of my education." "Your fingers become sensitive, I suppose," groaned the patient, "like those of a postal clerk, who can tell whether a letter has money in it or not as soon as he takes it in his hand."

MRS. PODUNKER: "Seems to me 'tisn't exactly right to be addin' so much water to the milk, 'specially on Sunday morning." Deacon Podunker (milkman): "Why, Miranda, you wouldn't stand in the way of salvation, would ye?" "Of course not." "Well, don't ye know one-half o' them what goes to church never hears a word, because they're asleep an' snorin' in the pews? It's shameful!" "Indeed, it is. But they shouldn't fall asleep." "They can't help it, Miranda. Give people rich milk, an' they're bound to feel sleepy. It's worse than opium. Pump a little more, Miranda."

## Gleanings from Many Sources.

CHINESE historians trace the beginnings of a postal service in their country back to the third century B.C.

To produce a Cashmere shawl of the best quality requires the constant labour of four persons for an entire year.

PHYSICIANS assert that baked potatoes are more nutritious than those cooked in any other way, and that fried ones are the most difficult to digest.

CONVICTS in British prisons are not permitted to see a mirror during the entire period of their incarceration. To a female this is keener punishment than solitary confinement.

A SMOKING tree is one of the natural wonders of Ono, Japan. Strange to say, it smokes only in the evening, just after sunset, and the smoke issues from the top of the trunk. The tree is sixty feet high.

WOMEN in Austria are never put in prison. A female criminal, no matter how terrible her record, instead of being sent to jail, is conveyed to one of the convents devoted to that purpose, and there she is kept until the expiration of the term for which she was sentenced.

AN energetic American has installed a pumping plant on the bank of the Jordan, near the Sea of Galilee. The water is bottled and shipped to various parts of the Christian world for baptismal purposes. It will be remembered that in this famous river the Saviour was baptized by St. John.

FOLDING fans of ivory, but of circular form, were known in Italy as early as the eleventh century. They were hung from the belt by a chain of gold. Through Catherine de Medici these circular fans were introduced into France. She seems to have given expression to her grief at the death of her husband by breaking all her fans.

A SYSTEM of insurance against strikes prevails in Austria. Holders of policies are indemnified if strikes occur in their establishments, whether voluntary, forced, or sympathetic. The cost of a policy is three or four per cent. of the annual payroll. The indemnity is fifty per cent. of the wages paid for the week preceding the suspension of work.

THE Israelites were numbered by Moses 1490 B.C., and by David, 1017 B.C.; Demetrius Phalereus is said to have taken a census of Attica, 317 B.C. Servius Tullius enacted that a general estimate of every Roman's estate and personal effects should be delivered to the Government upon oath every five years, 566 B.C. The proposal for a census in 1753 was opposed as profane. In the United Kingdom the census is now taken at decennial periods since 1801. The last census took place at midnight on the 31st March.

THE main features of the Coronation ceremony to take place next year will not be much departure from ancient forms. The "recognition" is followed by a religious service, and after the Nicene Creed, the coronation oaths are taken. Then come the anointing and the vesting of the Sovereign with the Episcopal insignia, the alb, the stole, and the pallium. The spurs, sword of State, and the sceptre are next presented. The coronation follows, and then the enthronement and homage. Lastly, the Communion Office is completed. The Queen Consort is crowned, anointed, and enthroned immediately after the King's installation has been completed, and she is conducted to her own throne on the King's left hand, the Royal spouses receiving the Sacrament together.

THE evidences of the pagan origin of many of the beliefs and superstitions of the Gael of the Western Highlands, are wonderfully numerous. Remnants of sun, moon, and fire worship are to be met with on all hands. For luck, everything and every person must, to begin with, turn sun-wise. There is a phrase which says, "sun-wise turn for everything," and the custom is still persistent. The moon, too, was held in high regard, and, on the appearance of the new moon, the Gael made obeisance to it, the women curtsying and the men bowing low in a peculiar fashion and raising their bonnets.

ONE of the great family of flowering animals is the "sea cucumber." These animals have long flattened bodies of a dark colour that ranges from brown to reddish purple, and their most active movement is a slow creeping along the bottom. The most curious thing about the "cucumber" is that it takes lodgers in a way. It has a large cavity within its body that is filled with water, and into this cavity a little fish called the flersafer works its way, and then lives within the helpless host. It is not a parasite, for it leaves its lodging to seek food, but it merely lodges in the holothurian for shelter, as the power of stinging that sea-cucumbers possess to a high degree renders them fairly safe from molestation. The little lodgers do not seem to do any harm to their landlords except when several take quarters in the same one, and then they may inflict fatal damage by overcrowding.

THE famous battle standard of the French—the Oriflamme—was originally merely the banner of the Abbey of St. Denis. Louis VI. was the first to use it officially when he marched against the Emperor of Germany, in 1124, and was so successful with it that until Agincourt, when it was last heard of, the French soldiery looked upon it as a kind of Palladium, which would put to flight any enemy who merely looked at it. The banner was a red ground upon which were embroidered golden flames, according to some, and to others merely a flaring red with no figure at all on it. The tricolour represents three flags, the red being the Oriflamme, the blue the banner of St. Martin, and the white the cross of St. Felix de Valois, who flourished in the twelfth century, and the combination of it with the modern French Eagle, introduced by Napoleon, in imitation of the Romans, made it probably the most intrinsically valuable standard of modern times.

THE sea anemone is one of the commonest of animals that blossoms as freely as do flowering plants, and is found clinging to rocks in sheltered places along shore in practically every part of the world. It is a tough, leathery tube, and all around the mouth, which is in the centre, are curling tentacles, not unlike the petals of a modern chrysanthemum. Some varieties are almost or entirely colourless, while in some others the tentacles are gorgeously tinted and rival the flowers of the field; but in all lurks death in a certain and horrible form. Watch some little creature touch the curling arms, and they will be seen to curl inward and wrap the intruders in their folds as they push it towards the mouth. The inner sides of the tentacles are covered by poison glands that sting the prey to insensibility or death, and so stop the struggles that might prove disastrous to the anemone. When the mouth is reached, the captive is pushed into the hollow interior, and the anemone shuts up into a reddish-brown ball until its meal is digested, when it spreads its fatal beauties for another victim.

## A Letter from the Editor.

ESTEEMED READER:—

It is highly gratifying to find so many thousands of people capable of distinguishing and appreciating a periodical that publishes good stories from amongst the mass of indifferent publications that now flood the market. THE LONDON READER has brought gladness to millions upon millions of the English speaking race during the high forty years of its existence, and it is being read with as much avidity to-day as it was in the early sixties.

That it should have held its own in the face of the keenest competition is proof, if proof were needed, of the high character and sustained interest of its stories.

There are still a few people, however, who do not take THE LONDON READER and it is these I am anxious to number among my readers. It is within your power to place this splendid pennyworth before your friends and so enable them to share with you the delight that comes from reading THE LONDON READER week by week.

I do not ask you to render this service for nothing and, as a return for whatever effort you may make, I am prepared to reward you handsomely, spending the money in presents for my readers, rather than advertising in a more general way. For the fullest particulars I must refer you to page 96. Trusting I may have the pleasure of sending a present to every reader.

Your friend,

THE EDITOR.



## Helpful Talks

## with Our Readers

BY THE EDITOR.

The Editor is pleased to hear from his readers at any time.

All letters must give the name and address of the writers, not for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith.

A. W. (Stamford).—See reply to "Ballantrane."—I cannot reply to correspondents through the post.

T. H.—I have read your sonnet with a good deal of pleasure, and like the thought it contains. It is not, however, quite well enough constructed for me to print, as some of the lines jar on the ear. Read it over aloud, and you will see what I mean. I consider the last six lines better than the opening portion.

Moss.—(1) You are to be commended for your industry in making a bagatelle board in your spare time—the balls and cups might be obtained second-hand by advertising in a paper like the *Exchange and Mart*, and I should advise your so doing. I cannot give the names and addresses of makers as it is against the rules, but you would find them in the directory. (2) *Ma chere ami* means my dear friend.

BALLANTRANE.—(1) Mr. Andrew Carnegie the millionaire, was born in Scotland, and his residence is Skibo Castle, Sutherlandshire. He made his money in America, and according to report wishes to dispose of it before his death. So far he has given large sums towards the establishment of Free Libraries, and in a lesser degree to charitable institutions. (2) Sir Thomas Lipton, City Road, London, would be sufficient address.

Miss J. (Cork).—You are just the reader I like to hear from, and it is highly gratifying to know that the *London Reader* has given you so much pleasure for so many years. You are the best advertisement the paper can have, and there should be no difficulty in obtaining three new subscribers, if not more in a city like Cork, and so you will reap the reward I am offering to intelligent readers. Pass on the good news to your friends and persuade them to subscribe for twelve numbers at your news-agent's, and then send the receipt to this office, and the prize you are entitled to shall be sent immediately.

JENNIE.—Act like a sensible girl, your Scotch descent ought to provide that good practical qualification—and give heed to what your father and mother say; surely you must have some idea of what "ways and means" signify in domestic life? Be practical.—If you marry there will likely be a little growing family, and what you are thinking of marrying on would not keep one chick and yourself and "himself." There are no prospects ahead of him, and forty pounds a year is barely sufficient for the most humble needs of one person. Remember that Cupid detests dire poverty. Neither does this wilful and world-devastating imp thrive on great riches. He tires of too much gold. You say you don't care at all "hardly" for this person, and you fear poverty. Listen. When Love can overcome and beat down Poverty, then is our little Cupid godlike. But he is not often taken with that kind of cramps.

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2368, 2371, 2374, 2377, 2380, 2383, 2386, 2389, 2392, 2395, 2398, 2401, 2404, 2407, 2410, 2413, 2416, 2419, 2422, 2425, 2428, 2431, 2434, 2437, 2440, 2443, 2446, 2449, 2452, 2455, 2458, 2461, 2464, 2467, 2470, 2473, 2476, 2479, 2482, 2485, 2488, 2491, 2494, 2497, 2500, 2503, 2506, 2509, 2512, 2515, 2518, 2521, 2524, 2527, 2530, 2533, 2536, 2539, 2542, 2545, 2548, 2551, 2554, 2557, 2560, 2563, 2566, 2569, 2572, 2575, 2578, 2581, 2584, 2587, 2590, 2593, 2596, 2599, 2602, 2605, 2608, 2611, 2614, 2617, 2620, 2623, 2626, 2629, 2632, 2635, 2638, 2641, 2644, 2647, 2650, 2653, 2656, 2659, 2662, 2665, 2668, 2671, 2674, 2677, 2680, 2683, 2686, 2689, 2692, 2695, 2698, 2701, 2704, 2707, 2710, 2713, 2716, 2719, 2722, 2725, 2728, 2731, 2734, 2737, 2740, 2743, 2746, 2749, 2752, 2755, 2758, 2761, 2764, 2767, 2770, 2773, 2776, 2779, 2782, 2785, 2788, 2791, 2794, 2797, 2800, 2803, 2806, 2809, 2812, 2815, 2818, 2821, 2824, 2827, 2830, 2833, 2836, 2839, 2842, 2845, 2848, 2851, 2854, 2857, 2860, 2863, 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6850, 6853, 6856, 6859, 6862, 6865, 6868, 6871, 6874, 6877, 6880, 6883, 6886, 6889, 6892, 6895, 6898, 6901, 6904, 6907, 6910, 6913, 6916, 6919, 6922, 6925, 6928, 6931, 6934, 6937, 6940, 6943, 6946, 6949, 6952, 6955, 6958, 6961, 6964, 6967, 6970, 6973, 6976, 6979, 6982, 6985, 6988, 6991, 6994, 6997, 7000, 7003, 7006, 7009, 7012, 7015, 7018, 7021, 7024, 7027, 7030, 7033, 7036, 7039, 7042, 7045, 7048, 7051, 7054, 7057, 7060, 7063, 7066, 7069, 7072, 7075, 7078, 7081, 7084, 7087, 7090, 7093, 7096, 7099, 7102, 7105, 7108, 7111, 7114, 7117, 7120, 7123, 7126, 7129, 7132, 7135, 7138, 7141, 7144, 7147, 7150, 7153, 7156, 7159, 7162, 7165, 7168, 7171, 7174, 7177, 7180, 7183, 7186, 7189, 7192, 7195, 7198, 7201, 7204, 7207, 7210, 7213, 7216, 7219, 7222, 7225, 7228, 7231, 7234, 7237, 7240, 7243, 7246, 7249, 7252, 7255, 7258, 7261, 7264, 7267, 7270, 7273, 7276, 7279, 7282, 7285, 7288, 7291, 7294, 7297, 7300, 7303, 7306, 7309, 7312, 7315, 7318, 7321, 7324, 7327, 7330, 7333, 7336, 7339, 7342, 7345, 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